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Dead Psychologists' Book Reviews: WAC Magic in the History and Systems of Psychology Course

by Robert S. Miller

I was asked this past fall to teach History and Systems of Psychology for the first time. I recognized at once that this would provide me with an excellent opportunity to explore more fully some WAC techniques that interest me: peer response and the use of portfolios, and to integrate writing-to-learn deeply into a course right from its conception. I had flirted with peer response the previous year in another course with good preliminary results, but the experiment was a one-time-only event. I had seen Meg Peterson-Gonzalez work magic with the technique in Composition, and I wanted to try it more extensively. I had heard Michelle Fistek and her students talk about the use of writing portfolios in political science classes, and I longed to give them a try. But like others, I face great inertia when I try to redo on-going courses that I have been teaching successfully. It is much easier to try new techniques in a new preparation.

History and Systems seemed like just the right place, because I perceived a need in that course for students to write to learn. The course is a sort of capstone in the psychology major. Usually taken in the senior year, it is designed to cause students to reflect on the various systems or theories of psychology they have encountered in their other courses and place these in historical

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context. In the course then, students are asked to integrate past and present. At this point in my development as a WAC advocate, I can no longer imagine how to bring that about *except* with writing experiences. I decided fairly early in my planning that I would have the students create a writing portfolio, that is, write a series of papers, putting each through a series of drafts, and then submit the whole thing as a portfolio at the end of the semester to be graded. Following Michelle's lead I decided I would have students peer review the first drafts each time, then using feedback from the peers, revise and create a second draft, which I would review. Students would then have the option of revising again for the final portfolio. Meg had used a similar system in Composition.

I thought it might work well to have students write five papers. My thinking was that if students wrote three drafts of each of five papers that would be 15 in all, one per week for each week of the semester. I was hoping that students would be learning about the process of writing as they went through the five assignments, and I decided that would be more likely if the assignments were similar each time.

A few weeks before the course was to begin, however, I still hadn't settled on the assignment. I wanted it to be one that would force students to do the kind of integration of past and present that we hope goes on in the History and Systems course. I also wanted it to be one that would get them to go beyond the mere memorization of historical events to a deeper understanding of historical forces. David Zehr loaned me a file of short paper assignments which he had used over the years in the course. I read through the file and one in particular captured my interest. It asked students to

speculate on what some historical figure would have thought about something in present-day psychology. I no longer remember the details. But I do remember that I looked up from reading that assignment, and my eyes focused on a tall stack of complimentary copies of general psychology texts on the windowsill in my office. It has been a good eight years since the last time I taught General Psych, but book reps keep sending these things to me, and about 35 had accumulated. I don't think I actually uttered the word, "Eureka," and I now regret missing such a perfect opportunity. In a flash an assignment came to me that would not only meet all the requirements of what I was looking for, but also allow me to make use of that unwanted stack of books.

I quickly sketched out what I later came to call the Dead Psychologists' Book Reviews assignment. The assignment asked the students to imagine that there is such a thing as Time Mail, which allows them to send written materials to people from the past. They were told they were going to be GIVEN a copy of a recent general psychology textbook, and that for each paper assignment they were to imagine sending the book to one of the important figures in the history of psychology accompanied by a cover letter which was provided in the assignment:

Dear Famous Historical Figure:

It is 1994 and I am a student of the history of psychology at Plymouth State College in Plymouth, NH. We regard you as an important figure in that history, and I am curious to know what you would think of how psychology has developed since the time you made your important contributions.

Enclosed is a psychology textbook of the sort we

might use today to introduce the discipline to college students. As such it summarizes where psychology is today in the late 20th century. I would appreciate it if you would read this book and send me a written reaction.

Specifically I am interested in knowing whether psychology seems to have developed as you would have expected. What in modern psychology surprises you the most? What surprises you the least? What do you see in modern psychology that reflects your influence? Feel free to answer only some of these questions or to take your reaction in another direction if you wish.

I know that you dead people all speak English (and conform to modern conventions of English usage as described in Diana Hacker's *A Writer's Reference*) and that you all have access to word processors. A 3- to 5-page word-processed response to my questions would be most appreciated.

Sincerely,
An Eager Student

The students' assignment was to role play the historical figure and write the letter they thought the person would write in response to the modern text. For each of the five papers, the student was given a choice of three or four historical figures, all ones we had studied within two weeks prior to the due date of the first draft.

I hoped this assignment would get each student to review modern psychology and integrate the modern with the historical. I hoped by role playing historical figures the student would come to appreciate the personalities of the figures and the *Zeitgeist* in which they worked in a way that would go beyond superficial

awareness of the figures' historical importance. I hoped the assignment was rich enough that it could be done five times without becoming tedious and with there being some positive transfer from the process of writing the earlier papers (and reading others' drafts) to the later ones. But I knew if all else failed, I was at least going to get rid of that stack of books on my windowsill.

The writing portfolio method does require a certain amount of class time. In this case I scheduled five classes that would be peer review classes. These were the five days when first drafts of each paper were due. The syllabus warned for each of these days, NO ONE WILL BE ADMITTED TO CLASS UNLESS ACCOMPANIED BY A FIRST DRAFT. This was because I intended the whole period be devoted to students reading each other's drafts and making written comments. If anyone were present without a draft, there would not be enough to go around. I also anticipated that other classes or pieces of classes might get devoted to discussing the writing assignments. Since I was designing a course I had never taught before, there was no great problem in setting aside this time. I had decided the writing portfolio would count as 40% of the students' course grade; within that context devoting whole classes to it made sense.

I have developed the habit of sharing my writing assignments with Roy Andrews at the College Writing Center. He provides help, guidance, constructive criticism, or (as in this case) enthusiastic encouragement. This time as we discussed the plan we became so excited, we decided merely observing wouldn't be enough: we wanted to participate. Specifically both Roy and I decided that we would write first drafts of each paper assignment, so we could participate in the peer review meetings.

In retrospect, I think this was a really important aspect of the whole project. The fact that Roy and I were writing these papers too gave a strong message of their importance. This also allowed us to be a part of the peer review process, modeling how to do that, and perhaps modeling how to do the assignments. One of the strengths of peer review is that weaker writers or writers who simply didn't understand the task very well may get to read the drafts of stronger writers who do.

The first peer review day we all were apprehensive, I think. I know Roy and I were! But this turned out to be the first evidence I had that this WAC experiment was going to work very well indeed. Every single student showed up. Every single student was accompanied by a complete first draft. To structure the task a bit, I asked each writer to staple a blank sheet of paper to the front of the draft and several more to the back. On the front sheet we each wrote three questions or statements to reflect what we most wanted our reviewers to tell us about our drafts. Reviewers were encouraged to write marginal comments that would reveal what they did not understand, also any comments that would help the writer decide what needed changing and what did not. They were asked on the blank sheets at the back to write general comments and to respond to the writer's questions. We discovered that first day that most of us could respond to about three drafts in the 40 minutes or so that were available. We left five minutes at the end to read what reviewers had written and free write about our intentions for revising. The period sped by with all 33 of us diligently working. Comments after this first session were highly positive.

A week later the second drafts were due. I believe

that first time everyone submitted one (except Roy and me—though it might have been even better for us to carry each paper through several drafts as the students did, we decided we were too young for saint-hood), and I was generally impressed with the results. A number of them were highly creative and represented great success getting inside the personality of the historical figure, making the voice of the letter compatible with the thinking of that figure, and taking the *Zeitgeist* in which the person would have been operating into account.

With the later assignments there were always one or two missing students on peer review day (some for what seemed to be legitimate reasons and some not) and one or two who failed to turn in the second draft. Students had been told the final portfolio would be evaluated 50% on its completeness (and 50% on the quality of the final drafts), and surely this motivated some of their diligence. However, I have tried all kinds of systems of reward (and sometimes punishment) for encouraging responsibility in other classes and never had anywhere near the success I had in this case. I have to feel that some of it came from the fairly consistent level of enthusiasm that developed for the writing in this course, and from the fact that the class seemed to become, as I had hoped it would, a community of writers that increasingly took responsibility for itself.

As a group we frequently discussed the writing that we were doing, and as our sense of community developed, I turned over more and more decisions about the project to the group. For example, after the second peer response day, I set aside some class time to discuss how the whole project was going. At first the discussion was lively and enthusiastic and exciting. Then some-

how the topic of grades came up and the fact that somehow the final portfolio would have to be evaluated for quality. The discussion immediately became awkward and confusing. We left the matter alone for that day, but at the next class I told the students I had decided that THEY should decide how the portfolios would be evaluated and even who should do this.

We scheduled a specific class for this around the middle of the semester. We began by freewriting about what makes a good paper in this course. From that we generated a list of specific ideas. When we saw these on the blackboard, we noticed that some of them were similar. We eventually reduced the list to four criteria that we thought could be used to evaluate the final drafts:

—Effectiveness of **angle** taken. (Includes use of intellectual stance, creativity, consistency, and effectiveness of point of view.)

—**Authority**. (Includes freedom and attitude of tone, confidence displayed by the letter writer.)

—**Readability**. (Includes flow and ease with which letter can be understood.)

—**Responsiveness to feedback** from readers.

At that same meeting, I asked who should evaluate the final drafts. Everyone agreed that as the course instructor, I should, but some thought maybe the writer should do a self-evaluation also. "How about a peer evaluation?" I asked. "And should all the final drafts be evaluated or only some smaller number the writer wanted to submit for this purpose?" There was no clear consensus on either of these two questions, and we put them aside for another week or so.

When I brought them up again, we had just peer reviewed the fourth of the five papers. This time a number of students declared that they had gotten tired

of the assignment, and argued that the papers were getting tedious and very much alike. I had felt this myself writing the draft of the fourth one. As a group, we decided we would cancel the fifth paper and devote the time saved to producing the best possible drafts of the first four.

We returned to the matter of how many final drafts would be evaluated, and after some discussion and without unanimous consensus we agreed that each student would indicate which two of the four should be evaluated. This was a compromise between a subgroup who wanted only one evaluated and one who wanted all four. After more discussion, we agreed (again without unanimity) that the two final drafts would be evaluated first by the writer, second by one randomly chosen peer, and finally by the instructor, with each of these having an equal vote in determining the 50% of the grade to be based on quality. When the time came I prepared an appropriate rating sheet, on which each of the two papers could be evaluated on the four criteria the group had chosen. Students did the self-evaluation first and submitted it with the portfolio. On the day the portfolio was due the class period was given over to the peer evaluations. As instructor I did my evaluation last and without looking at the two that had already been completed.

I do not want to give the false impression that everything about these writing experiences went perfectly. One problem already mentioned was that a number of writers found the similarity of the assignments tedious. Some students responded to this by writing what amounted to "formula papers," at least for the early drafts. These were generic responses of amazement to the modern text, interspersed with a few biographical or theoretical references to the historical

figure's life and work. Usually, however, the readers' responses to these early drafts succeeded in motivating the writer to overcome the problem in the final draft.

When I read the final portfolios, I was often astonished at the improvement between the second and final drafts. This often was much greater than that between the first and second drafts. A few students confessed in the written evaluation of the whole project at the end of the semester that they had made only superficial changes between the first and second drafts, preferring to wait for the instructor's response before attempting serious revision.

The one aspect of the project that I would definitely avoid another time is peer evaluation of the portfolio. Many students did this in what appeared to be a serious and responsible way, but a sizable group did not. There were many cases where the peer gave the portfolio top ratings in every category, when this did not seem justified, and, in fact, several students admitted on the project evaluation that they had done this because they were unhappy about having to evaluate others. Interestingly very few students gave their own portfolios top ratings. In fact, quite often the self-evaluation was the lowest of the three.

Despite these problems I regard my first experience with writing portfolios as a huge success. Of the 31 students in the class 28 submitted portfolios that were entirely complete. In most of these cases the quality of the final drafts was indisputably excellent. The enthusiasm which motivated this completeness and excellence was revealed on the project evaluations students wrote. Nearly every student encouraged me to make use of the portfolio assignment again in this course. I intend to take their advice.

Buffy and Elvis: The Sequel

by David Zehr

Introduction

In an earlier WAC article (Zehr & Henderson, 1994) I wrote about Buffy and Elvis, two fictional students at a small New England college, whose escapades formed the foundation for a writing assignment in my Introductory Psychology class. Briefly, students were asked to read a small paperback book on research methods titled *How to Think Straight About Psychology* (Stanovich, 1992). The writing assignment required students to write a one-act play featuring Buffy and Elvis with the intent of demonstrating to me, through the dialogue, that they understood and could apply the concepts outlined in the Stanovich text. I provided a general outline, and beyond that students were given complete creative control over the play's content. The assignment was, at least in my mind, a huge success.

Since I feel that the Stanovich book is an invaluable adjunct to the course, I use it every semester. I also now have two writing assignments based on its contents rather than one. That leaves me with a dilemma; I can't ask students to write two plays in one semester, nor do I want students from one semester "looking back" at what was written the previous semester (since oftentimes more than just inspiration is garnered from perusing someone else's paper). The solution to the dilemma was easy; as a slave to popular culture I decided to mimic Hollywood, master of the sequel, and bring back Buffy and Elvis for a second go around, albeit

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not in a play. They would continue to be the focus of the writing assignments, but I would vary the genre in which the students would write.

Assignment # 1: The Short Story

Buffy and Elvis's next incarnation was in a short story. Once again I provided a framework for the students by writing the beginning of a science fiction piece. Briefly, Buffy overheard a devious plot by aliens to "dumb down" the earth, thereby ripening it for takeover. Buffy's job was to convince Elvis that the plot was for real, and that by using their knowledge from the Stanovich text they could thwart it.

Once again, the results of this assignment were gratifying. The creativity and variety inherent in the papers made them a pleasure to read and evaluate. I also sensed informally that the students enjoyed the freedom they had in writing the papers, and that they were happy to demonstrate their learning in a less than conventional manner (at least for a psychology course). I retained this genre in a subsequent semester, but varied the theme. The second time around the assignment was titled "The Bridges of Grafton County: Or, Buffy and Elvis, a Love Story." Going from science fiction to romance did little to stifle the success of this approach.

Assignment # 2: Dear Buffy and Elvis

Last spring I was having a hard time coming up with a new twist for Buffy and Elvis, so I decided to procrastinate and read the newspaper. As I leafed through the "Living Arts" section of the *Boston Globe* I skipped several movie and book reviews, skimmed "Dear Beth," and developed a severe case of nausea when I came to the gossip column and noticed the names of Michael

Jackson, Princess Di, and Roseanne all within a single paragraph. Ready to toss the paper aside, I noticed that there was one thing left that I couldn't pass up—that witty and wise woman, Ann Landers. Witnessing once again the triumph of common sense over idiocy, I knew right then what my next assignment would be like; Buffy and Elvis were going to write an advice column for their campus newspaper.

I wrote ten letters to Buffy and Elvis, dispensers of advice to the methodologically-challenged. The students had to ghostwrite the responses for Buffy and Elvis (since they were way too busy). And of course, all of the answers had to be based on concepts derived from the Stanovich text.

This turned out to be one of my favorite assignments. The students had a wonderful time writing their responses, and I had a wonderful time reading them. A formal evaluation of the assignment corroborated what I believed about the effectiveness of this approach to learning research methodology. The written comments by students suggested that the text and the writing connected with them in ways that up to that point I didn't know were possible. For example, one student wrote, "These assignments helped me to relax and enjoy the class. They helped me be creative and have a little fun while learning. It's not often I enjoy writing papers...I learned a lot." I was so excited about this that I submitted my findings to the American Psychological Society's Teaching Institute, which is part of the annual APS conference. My presentation last summer piqued interest from psychologists across the country—Buffy and Elvis have gone national (Zehr, 1994). A sample of student writing for this assignment is included at the end of this article.

Assignment # 3: Buffy and Elvis Go to the Polls

This past fall saw a sweeping change in Washington D.C., as voters overwhelmingly handed Congress over to the Republican Party. A paradox of politics is that it has tremendous implications for all people, yet many of those people don't participate in the process. Buffy and Elvis, however, were inspired by the elections, and the political arena formed the backdrop of my most recent writing assignment.

In this assignment students read that Buffy and Elvis were watching a televised debate between an incumbent Senator and his challenger, a newcomer to politics. I provided a dialogue for the debate that included the voice of a moderator and the Senator. The moderator asked questions, the Senator responded, and the students cast themselves in the role of the challenger and wrote their responses to the Senator. Of course, their answers had to be based on the Stanovich text. Most, if not all, were able to handily rebut the Senator, leaving Buffy and Elvis no choice but to vote for change. A brief sample of student writing for this assignment is included at the end of this article.

Conclusion

Buffy and Elvis continue to evolve. What I thought would be a one-time assignment has turned into a pair of alter-egos for myself. I can't guarantee that students remember all that they were taught in lecture, nor that they remember all that they read about in their regular textbook, but I dare say that they don't soon forget Buffy, Elvis, and the Stanovich text. Although most will never take another psychology course, I believe they leave my class a bit wiser about research methods, which renders them more effective consumers of scientific information that increasingly is finding its way into popular media.

Writing Sample for "Dear Buffy and Elvis"
(student responses are in italics)

Dear Buffy and Elvis:

My new boyfriend is a manipulative control freak, I think. The other night I found a *Penthouse* magazine in his room and we got into a big fight. I told him that such filth is disgusting and harmful, especially because it causes men to rape. He didn't agree with me on that point, and ranted something about "manipulating variables" and the need for "controlled conditions." Buffy and Elvis, his words frightened me. What do you think he meant?

Should I Stay or Should I Go?

Dear Should I Stay or Should I Go?:

We wouldn't be so quick to label your boyfriend as a manipulation freak. He is most likely referring to scientific research methods using controlled conditions and manipulating variables to eliminate a number of alternative theories that may have been proposed. Scientists try to eliminate the maximum number of incorrect explanations by directly controlling the experimental situation. Scientists manipulate the variable believed to be the cause (in this case reading pornography) and observe whether or not a different effect occurs. So before deciding whether to stay in this relationship perhaps you should look at some scientific studies done on the effect of reading pornography and its relationship to incidences of rape. It would also be advisable to investigate your boyfriend's feelings and attitudes about women and about rape. This would more likely give you a few more relevant ideas about whether or not you wish to continue your relationship with him.

Dear Buffy and Elvis:

What's all this crap I read in the newspapers about condoms and AIDS? I'm tired of people telling me I should use those things. I hate 'em. They reduce my pleasure. And besides, I got a buddy who's quite the ladies' man. He's probably slept with at least 150 women and he doesn't have AIDS.

Not One of Those Wimpy 90s Guys

Dear Not One of Those Wimpy 90s Guys:

It seems that you may be a victim of the 'man who' reasoning technique. Research done involving the use of condoms to reduce the possibility of contracting AIDS is a probabilistic trend. Probabilistic trends simply mean that there is a statistically demonstrated trend (in this case of contracting AIDS being more likely if one does not practice safe sex) yet there are exceptions in every case. Quite often we can cite examples of persons who do not fit these trends, but that does not negate the high probability of it happening to the majority. In this case we would strongly urge you not to try to beat the odds. If you knew from research done on slot machines that the probability of getting three like objects to win was 1 out of 1000 tries, how much money would you want to risk? In the case of AIDS and not practicing safe sex, remember you are gambling against the odds and risking your life!

Writing Sample for "Buffy and Elvis Go to the Polls"
(student responses are in italics)

Moderator: "Senator, there's a strong current of cynicism in the voting public. Nobody trusts anybody, and everybody seems unhappy with the direction this country is headed in. What can you do to soften the cynicism and restore a sense of happiness?"

Senator: "Well, I'm glad you asked that. Once again the answer is easy. My wife, Daffodil, just wrote her second book on that very topic. The book is called *Tickling the Child Within: Ten Steps to Being Happy*. It's on sale in all the major bookstores, and she spells out quite simply how we can all be happier. Just saw the latest sales figures and I couldn't be happier myself."

Challenger: *"Well, that was a rather shameless plug. There's certainly some ethical concerns emerging here about the use of public office for private gain, but we won't get into that now.*

The Senator's wife is a delightful lady, but I'm quite sure she has little understanding about the psychological workings of the human mind. She cannot possibly have a handle on the principles involved, so her work, although cute, is little more than a graphic depiction of recipe knowledge. She naively believes that if you follow these simple steps that your depression will disappear. This is grossly simplistic.

As far as the psyche of the voting public goes I couldn't agree more. The people of America are disgusted with politics as usual. No one trusts politicians today and with good reason. Even a fool knows that when push comes to shove the politicians are going to vote the way the special interest groups want them to because they hold the lifeline to their careers: money. If you're faced with a decision to vote your conscience and lose your career or vote against your conscience and keep your career, only the most principled are going to make the moral choice. Thus, Washington has become a den of thieves, and America knows it."

Moderator: "What should we do to help the poor in this country?"

Senator: "Nothing! The poor are more than capable of helping themselves. Just last week I met a family whose annual income is $3,000. They're healthy and happy, and that's what America is all about. Sure, they don't drive BMWs or have jewels and furs like I do, but they don't need that stuff—they got each other. They eat two square meals a day and the patches on their clothes look pretty strong to me."

Challenger: *"I hate to say it, but I agree with Senator Fullovit on this issue, but for drastically different reasons. Senator Fullovit is relying on what we call 'man-who' statistics. These are colorful stories that seem to contradict the actual statistics. But there are always exceptions. Statistics establish a probability of a certain situation, not an absolute law. Using these anecdotes may be emotionally vivid but they do a disservice to the facts of the given situation."*

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Just Imagine...

by Sharon Duffy, Elmer Haley, and
Amanda Stevens Milligan

Picture this: Your students are digging into their textbooks and doing research in the library -- with a smile. They are writing interesting, focused papers. They are discovering the joy of learning. This is happening here at Plymouth State College, and we are some of the students who have experienced it.

After spending an entire term in Richard Chisholm's Study of Language class, we have come to understand his methods of using writing to promote learning. Many teachers have begun to use the writing process methods in their classes, and as students, we have become very familiar with journal entries, in-class writings, and other thought-provoking methods. Chisholm adds a new dimension to this process: scenario-based writing.

As Chisholm explains in the 1993 *Journal of Writing Across the Curriculum*, he began using the scenarios to help students "connect subject matter to their immediate environments." Scenario-based assignments have done just that for us and much more; they have created a context. We can write from the "inside" rather than looking blankly at an assignment from the "outside."

Just what are scenarios and how do they bring students inside the writing process? Scenarios are hypothetical situations that determine the audience or the situation for a paper. They can be serious proposals or exaggerated events and/or characters which liberate students to approach an assignment from creative angles. Students bond with characters that grows in their imagi-

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nations; they create a personal relationship with the fictitious situation, and, as a result, they write richer papers.

Consider one of Chisholm's humorous scenarios:

What shall we name the baby?

You are a crotchety old person who has just learned of the birth of a new child in the family. You are sure your name would be most suitable for the child. Using your research and the etymological chart of your name, convince your hesitant relatives that there is no name more fitting than your own. Write a persuasive yet informal letter that will assure your name lives on in infamy!

Outrageous scenarios are not merely an opportunity to get giddy. The expectations are clear, aims tangible, and substance of the paper grounded in the concrete research process. Students exercise creativity within the confines of skimming and scanning for information. Rambling statistics and irrelevant ideas tacked on at the end of a paragraph are curbed when students have a constant scenario to keep them focused.

Now consider the serious scenario:

Aunt Matilda

Your Great Aunt Matilda has just been diagnosed with schizophrenia. Integrate the articles in our text into a compassionate, factual account of fictitious Aunt Matilda's language disorder. Imagine that a brother living overseas writes to ask about her condition. In his letter he confuses the symptoms of aphasia with those of schizophrenia. As a family spokesperson, relay infor-

mation to the distant brother explaining the differences, and easing the brother's mind.

Upon reading the scenario, students will get inside the assignment by bonding with the brother. They might ask themselves, "Who is my brother?" "What is he like?" "Do I have anything in common with him?" and "Why is he overseas anyway?" Because the instructor has only fleshed out a scenario rather than filled in all the pieces, the students have the opportunity to develop real people and gear real responses for those people. The possibilities are endless and a myriad of innovative papers are the result.

In another instance, students create the audience to listen to their academic insights. Consider this scenario:

Commingled Recyclables: Outlandish or English?

A friend has commented that "commingled recyclables" is an outlandish mixture of words and not even English. Respond in writing to this person, explaining how these words follow the rules of English phonetics, phonology, and morphology. Your task here is to write up this material as a paper for the English Club. This means that you will have to assimilate the material well enough to write it for a general college audience. But your main task remains the same: you need to explain how these words follow the regular rules of English word formation.

Explaining how English words are formed could prove to be a boring, frustrating activity. The scholarly material students were asked to use in their defense of "commingled recyclables" was extensive. The imag-

ined target audience made the assimilation process manageable.

For example, both Elmer and Sharon wrote their papers as though they were actually speaking to the "English Club" suggested in Chisholm's assignment. They each pictured a "real" English Club, and then addressed their papers to this group. Each voice was distinct since each developed a sense of camaraderie with the imagined English Club.

Amanda also addressed an English Club, but instead of speaking directly to the club, she kept an image of that club in her head. She then continually retrieved the image, to develop a voice suitable for her intended audience.

As documented in these brief illustrations, scenarios offer us a chance to create an audience, a voice, and to integrate relevant information. Instead of simply reading and regurgitating facts in a paper, we bite off and taste, chew and swallow, and finally digest information. First we read for comprehension, then we seek connections, and finally we create something that illustrates our new understanding. Elmer compares how learning through scenario assignments measures up to learning by way of traditional papers:

> So do I learn as much? You bet! In fact I think that I learn more. For one thing, I am not getting tired and frustrated while I maintain a focus. Instead, I use this time to concentrate on my research material. I read carefully and highlight material that I consider relevant for the assignment. This gives me plenty of time to absorb the material, and thus I retain a great deal of information when I am finished researching. Essentially, if you see the material enough times and think about it long enough, it is

bound to sink in and stick with you for some time.

Perhaps the most exciting result of scenario assignments is the confidence it creates in students as writers and learners. Amanda explains how scenario assignments helped her to make the jump from student to active, committed learner:

> I really have learned. This has become a study of language, an exploration of theories, and my own thoughts. I was not just reading but thinking and asking questions before I wrote, while I wrote, and even after I wrote. Rather than simply committing the old and new theoretical linguistics to memory, I was asked to apply their views to a situation within my reach. This gave me the confidence to go beyond application, in many cases, and actually begin theories of my own. I began to feel like a scholar rather than a student. Isn't that what learning should be: going beyond; becoming an environment of scholars not memorizers? This class forced me to stop fretting over the details, it forced me to shut off my multiple-choice mentality and look for connections. I found myself learning beyond the syllabus because of the "user-friendliness."

Many students may not see scenario writing assignments as "user-friendly" at first. Many students "froze" at the beginning of the year. They were afraid of the freedom and unfamiliarity of the assignments. Other students, once they understood how to do the assignments, did not like them because it was harder to "fake" a paper; they could no longer hit the periphery of issues and think they were done with the paper. The third dislike students voiced was the time frame of Chisholm's assignments. We were given one week to do

each paper. Many times that did not seem like enough time to do all the interaction that was necessary. These are all concerns associated with scenario writing, but all of them can be dealt with directly.

The most important step in beginning scenario-based assignments is to give lots of clear explanation. Students need to understand how to use the scenario as a focus. If they do not, they may become confused about the goal of the assignment; the risk is that they may focus on the scenario instead of using the scenario to focus on the information. In fact, this did happen in Chisholm's Study of Language Class. A student wrote a beautiful story to fit the scenario, yet totally missed the concept of integrating the material from the homework and research. For this reason, providing a model of a paper would be a good idea, but having plenty of time to ask questions and to understand the new expectations is a must.

The issue of time is debatable. On a paper per week system, the papers remain compact and centered on one idea. On a two-week system, students would have more time to interact with other sources outside of the text and the library. In the first week, they would write a draft based on text and library research. In the second week, they would have time in class to share and discuss with their peers. Then, they would revise their papers to include any new information or understandings. We think this two week system narrows in on what is important in the scenario assignments: real life connections.

Once the students catch the fun of scenario writing, they want to use it more. Sharon has created her own scenarios for papers in other classes to help herself better connect to an assignment. She likes the freedom in scenarios:

My favorite part of the scenario assignments was the

creativity they allowed. They gave my artistic mind a chance to shine. I could add as many "fictionalized" details as I wanted to in order to bring out notes of interest found in the research.

Perhaps the most fun of all was a new assignment of Chisholm's: He asked us to create our own scenario and outline a possible response to the fictitious situation. This forced us to "use up all the information" in a section of our text. The response was amazing. We excitedly discussed our papers in and out of class. We overheard discussions of many diverse ideas. One student created a scenario that charged Chaucer with criminal misuse of language. Another student brought Chaucer into the Twentieth Century to illustrate language change. These students had come a long way from, "freezing" over the flexibility of the assignments, to taking them up earnestly. Scenario writing finally thawed them.

The following three papers are our examples of how we each dealt with the assignment on commingled recyclables. We feel they represent not only the "fun" of the assignment, but also the scholarship that was developed through our interaction with this assignment.

Commingled Recyclables: Do They Follow the Rules of Language?
by Amanda Stevens Milligan

Our English lexicon is as vast as the sea. Our language is as seductive and changing as the crash of waves on the shores of the English civilization, and all of us are pulled in by its allure; all of us are "amateur connoisseurs of words" (Francis 379). In his exploration of "word-making," Francis attempts to bring us to an

appreciation of our "large, complex, highly diversified in origin, and constantly changing" vocabulary (378). He also tries to bring us an understanding of its power to fashion new words through a variety of predictable processes. Our new words build on the old and originate as derivations, compounds, shifts, back formations, clippings, proper name modifications, imitations, blends, and coinages (368).

The easiest way to understand our vast system of language is to dissect the microparticles to get at the macrocosm we call language. A relatively new word, familiar to any of us who generate trash, is "commingled recyclables." Is it, however, really a word or merely a "non-word" (Halle 336)? How did our society arrive at such a title for what is simply common, everyday GARBAGE? What does it reveal about the "complexities" (Gleason 365) of our language and our "innate" (Halle 337) human talent for creating words? What rules of the game are illustrated by this new label: "commingled recyclables?"

Both COMMINGLED and RECYCLABLES arrived at the threshold of our changing lexicon through the process of derivation. Derivations are formed by adding affixes to existing words or morphemic structures. In this case, the existing words MINGLE and CYCLE act as the stems and the affixes, (co-, re-, -ed, and -s), attaching themselves to the stems. The result is new words and new meanings. If we look at the stem MINGLE we automatically view it as the verb meaning "to bring or mix together" (Webster's 726). CYCLE, on the other hand, is surrounded by ambiguity. It can mean an interval of time or the verb to pass through that interval (Webster's 280). These ambiguities become even more obvious when we venture into the internal hierar-

chical structure of these words (Ohio 352).

The hierarchical "tree" of words help to demonstrate the strengths and weaknesses that individual morphemes bring to stem words. Breaking these derivations down, we begin to see the steps followed when creating new words, as well as the innate ambiguities within the process.

commingled (verb/adj.)

co- mingle -ed

(prefix) (verb) (suffix)

recyclables (noun)

re- cycle -able -s

(prefix)(verb)(suffix)(suffix)
(noun)
or
(adj.) (noun)

With the addition of each "derivational morpheme either the stem's meaning or its part of speech changes" (348). For instance, co- doesn't change the part of speech of MINGLE, but it does alter its meaning. In a very redundant manner it over-emphasizes the "togetherness of MINGLE. Re- doesn't change the meaning of cycle, but it does clarify its part of speech; it is a verb. However, when we add -able to RECYCLE, it increases the ambiguity; RECYCLABLE could be a noun or an adjective. Not only is able derivational, but

it is also considered a "content morpheme," for its independent, identifiable meaning," (350) "capable or worthy of" (Webster's 3), alters the meaning of RECYCLE. The mystery ends when we add "s," for now there is no doubt; RECYCLABLES can only be a noun.

After diagramming the internal structure of "commingled recyclables," we might next consider the resulting semantics of this combination of morphemes or small bits of meaning. How many of us think of inanimate objects as being able to "mingle" with each other? Don't we usually say "oil and water don't mix," or "I mixed up my dates," or "I added eggs to the cake mix?" People, on the other hand, are thought of as either mingling or mixing. We mingle at a party or go to mixers when we are in college.

However, if we look at the word "commingled recyclables" with the *Oxford English Dictionary's* historical uses of the word, we find that our modern semantics have narrowed the meaning of COMMINGLED. Bacon's use of the word in 1626 illustrates the mingling of inanimate objects, "Dissolutions of gum tragacanth and oil of sweet almonds do not commingle" (OED). If we are content to accept "commingled recyclables" as part of our vast lexicon, doesn't that represent our return to the broader, earlier sense of COMMINGLE? It would seem so. Yet, each time I hear the term I can't help but whimsically wonder, "Are the plastics and aluminums chatting about environmental consciousness?"

RECYCLABLES, however, can not boast the same longevity that commingled can. The first time the OED recorded it in print was in the early 1970s. In 1971, The *New Yorker* used the term when discussing the benefits of using recyclable horns for publishers' bindings (OED), and shortly thereafter, *The Guardian* discussed "the shape of cars to come" (OED). Yet, as early

as 1926, industrial society was using the term RE-CYCLE. "To reuse or convert a waste material into a usable form" was popular among petroleum industries, paper manufacturers, organic chemists, and bankers: "bankers find ways to recycle hot money," (OED). It wasn't until 1973 that the OED documented the first printed use of the term "recycler" or "recyclists." Today, we are all recyclers, whether we want to be or not. We sort our recyclables, or we commingle them. We are living in cities, towns, and small communities that are absolving land fills and organizing hazardous waste removal drives. We are advancing. Thus, the odd combination of words is a product of society's advancement. This complicated label, "commingled recyclables," is more than just a sign on a trash barrel; it is a constant reminder of just how intricate and complex our lives have become since the 1970s. It is a reflection of a society that, like the bottles and cans at the bottom of the barrel, mingles in a world of environmental awareness.

The complex semantics of "commingled recyclables" originates not in the morphology of language, but further back in the basics of all word, its phonology. For, as Halle notes, "speech is a noise produced to convey meaning" (334). If we delve into the combination of speech sounds, we discover other inconsistencies in our language system. Our writing system is our attempt to translate sound's meaning to paper. This is the case with all attempts at translation: our phonetic structures lose something, perhaps their crispness, when transferred to letters on paper (Callary 301). This "misfit" between the sounds of our language and the orthography (spelling) is great, and one of the reasons our language poses difficulty to those learning it as a second language (301).

In trying to create a "phonetic transcription" (304)

for "commingled recyclables," we can become quite frustrated. The root of this frustration lies in the "misfit." There are three limitations in the system we call spelling: 1) there can be more or fewer sounds in a word than the spelling suggests; 2) one sound may be represented by several spellings; and 3) one spelling can stand for several different sounds (301).

For instance, in the word COMMINGLED, there seems to be a G combined with LED yielding the sound /g l/, which sounds nothing like it looks. The /k/ sound at the beginning of the word is represented by a C, thus we have an instance of a sound finding a variety of spellings. In addition, the ING spelling is so different from its sound (phone) that the phonetic transcription results in no /g/ sound at all, rather /in/. This highlights the point that there are fewer sounds in the word than the spelling would have us believe. The transcription for RECYCLABES is very distant from its orthography: /risaykl b lz/. The final /z/ of ABLES, the beginning RE, /ri/, and the ending BLE, /b l/ illustrates vividly that one spelling can represent several different sounds. After tackling several transcriptions, we begin to realize the extent of our spelling limitations. It becomes obvious that we first communicated with our tongues, not our pencils. The rules of our language, though erratic, ambiguous, and filled with inconsistencies, have allowed us to interact. Our innate understanding of these often vague rules finds us not only using word but creating new words. "Commingled recyclables" is one such word. It demonstrates the power of our language, a language that succeeds in creating a term that is integral to our changing relationship with our world. Our language rules have exhibited the most crucial trait of all . . . flexibility.

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Commingled Recyclables
by Elmer Haley

Dear members of the honorable P.S.C. English Club:

I feel that it is my obligation and duty to address an issue that has recently been brought to my attention by a highly regarded individual of our community. The issue deals with the fact that language is governed by rules, the same rules that people use when they communicate orally. As speakers, we seldom, if at all, acknowledge the existence of these rules, but as linguists we realize that rules do indeed exist and have an impact on the way we speak. However, "linguists do not agree on the specific nature of the rules, nor do they agree on the methods appropriate for studying them" (Chisholm). To illustrate this point, I would like to share with you an example of what I mean. In fact it is because of this very example that I am addressing you today.

After lunch one day, a distinguished individual drew to my attention that we no longer dispose of empty cans and bottles in the "trash" container but

rather in the "Commingled Recyclables" container. My friend commented that "Commingled Recyclables is an outlandish mixture of words and not even English." His comment kept me from many good nights of sleep while I thought about what he had to say. I finally decided that he was both right and wrong.

I have concluded that my friend was partially correct in assuming that "Commingled Recyclables" is outlandish. In researching the term, I found that "commingle" is a verb meaning "to mingle or mix together, to blend" and was introduced to the English language as early as 1626 A.D. (OED). However, "commingled" is found to be a participial adjective formed on the preceding to mean "mingled together, blended" (OED). The use of this term dates as far back as 1648 A.D. (OED). Is this not outlandish? Would it not make more sense to restrict "commingled" only to be used as the past tense of the verb "commingle?"

And how about the word "Recyclables." Isn't that just a dandy word? It appears to stem from the word "cycle." According to the OED, the oldest use of the word "cycle" dates back to 1387 A.D. when it was defined as a noun to mean "a recurrent period of a definite number of years adopted for the purposes of chronology." In 1631 A.D. it was defined in astronomical terms to mean "a circle or orbit in the heavens" (OED). By 1881 A.D. the term had been defined in mathematical terms to mean "a closed path in a cyclic or multiply-connected region" (OED). Although defined differently by different areas of study, the word remained as a noun. Apparently during the 19th century, the word "cycle" underwent what W. Nelson Francis refers to as a "functional shift." Francis defines "functional shift" as a "shift of a word from one part of speech to another without altering its form" (371). As early as 1842 A.D., "cycle" underwent the functional shift and

was defined as a verb meaning "to move or revolve in cycles."

But we should not forget that we are dealing with the word "recyclables" and not "cycle." It becomes quite clear that we must add the prefix "re-" and the suffix "-able" to the stem "cycle" in order to create such a word. However, the Ohio State Language Files point out that "words with more than one affix are not formed in one single step with the affixes and stem just strung together" (353). The problem then arises of which affix to add first. Do we add "re-" to the word "cyclables" or do we add "-ables" to the word "recycle?" According to the grammatical laws and OSLF, affixes attach only to verbs (353). Therefore, "re-" cannot attach to "cyclables" which is an adjective. We must in fact add the suffix "ables" to the word "recycle." By doing so we will satisfy the grammatical rule of affixes. Both "re-" and "-able" will then attach to a verb. However, the word "recyclable" did not form quite that simply. The verb "recycle" was developed first in 1926 and meant "to reuse (a material) in an industrial process; to return to a previous stage of a cyclic process" (OED). It was not until some 45 years later that the adjective "recyclable" was defined as "capable of being recycled" (OED).

In essence then, we have changed the word "cycle" from a noun in 1387 to a verb in 1842 into an adjective which only dates back to 1971 (OED). This in itself seems a bit outlandish, especially when we recognize the changes that the word must go through in order to be used in such a term as "Commingled Recyclables" when we could just use the word "trash." So indeed, my friend's opinion was partially correct after all. On the surface of language, however, my friend missed the entire idea behind the term "Commingled Recyclables." "Commingled" is commonly accepted as mixed. Since

the derivation of the word "recyclables," we commonly associate it with products "capable of being recycled," especially bottles and cans. On the surface of the term, we have two words combined: Commingled + Recyclables (mixed + products capable of being recycled). In essence, the container is used for the same purpose as always--to collect trash. The only things that have changed are the ideas of how to treat trash and the wording on the side of the container that supports that idea. We are essentially using our language as it is meant to be used--to communicate thoughts and ideas to others, to create an understanding within a set environment.

As you think about that, I hope that you realize the point behind all of this. Language is governed by rules that we seldom acknowledge the existence of. These rules impact the way we speak and affect the things that we say. Although all rules are not yet known about language, those that are, are not always agreed upon by linguists. However there is nothing we can do about that. Since language is dynamic, it is plagued by controversy, as is anything that is considered dynamic. Chances are that as long as language survives, there will be no one way to understand it. The best we can do is to use language as it is meant to be used and understand that it is dynamic.

Green English: An address to the English Club on Young Words and Trash Management
by Sharon Duffy

Friends of the English Club, thank you for allowing me to share with you today a few thoughts on our most recent word investigation, that of "commingled recyclables." Some of you have proposed that this word is "outlandish" and an unlikely candidate for

being an English word. I have taken this on as my thesis. I am very excited to show you today, that yes, while there are some difficulties with "commingled recyclables," it is an English word that strays very little from the standard rules of English speech. I have broken my research up into four areas: morphemic rules, phonetic rules, phonemic rules, and syntactical rules.

Allow me, please, to work from the largest context down to the smallest. Syntax, as you are aware, concerns itself with the way in which words are combined or ordered to create meaning. Even though "commingled recyclables" is not a complete sentence, it is a compound word phrase. Our grammar allows us to combine words in the adjective-noun order, and this is what we have in "commingled recyclables." And yet, this is just where some of you have made your objections to the validity of "commingled recyclables" being an English word. You have said that "recyclable" is an adjective; and therefore, it is impossible to pluralize it. It is possible to add affixes to words to create new words or new meanings. This process is called "derivation" and is explained by W. Nelson Francis: "The derivational process (of creating new words) consists of using an existing word" (recyclable in our case) ". . . as a stem to which affixes are attached" (368). We create a new noun because our language allows us to derive new forms from old word roots.

"Commingled" falls into the same derivational category. The root "mingle" is quoted as being in written literature in the *Oxford English Dictionary* since 1626. Only twenty-two years later, the morphemes "ed" and "co" appear in the writing of Herrick: "Of flowers a sweet commingled coronet" as reported again by the OED. Through time, speakers derive new words to adequately express their ideas by manipulating the

words they already know.

Derivation, and other word changes, can exist because language is made up of small parts of meaning. We call the smallest parts of language that have meaning morphemes. There are two types of morphemes, bound and free. Free morphemes are bits that we recognize as words, like "car, spider, and race" (Ohio State 348). Bound morphemes are small bits that have meaning, but "must be attached to other morphemes." Examples are "un-,-ed, and -s" (Ohio State 348).

We can break commingled recyclables into English morphemes, thus indicating again, that "commingled recyclables" is an English word. It breaks down into the free morphemes "mingle" and "cycle" and the bound morphemes "co," "ed," "re," and "s." We can further categorize these morphemes into derivational ones which change the meaning of the word and inflectional ones which merely change the form of the word. This gives us "ed" and "s" as inflectional morphemes and "co" and "re" as derivational morphemes. Specifically, "com" (a form of "co" according to OED) was added to "mingle," and "ed" was added to "commingle" to form an adjective. Likewise, "re" was added to "cycle," before "able" was added to create an adjective, and lastly, "s" was added to make a noun.

Morphemes are made up from even smaller parts known as phonemes. Phonemes are the smallest bits of sound that create meaning. The larger context of this is phonetics, the study of phonemes. Phoneticians have created phonetic alphabets to symbolize the sounds of language. These phonetic alphabets, regardless of language, "share three characteristics: each symbol consistently represents one and only one language sound,

each sound is consistently represented by one symbol, and the number of sounds is equal to the number of symbols" (Callary 302). These phonetic alphabets form the basis for the pronunciation charts in dictionaries. The OED phonetically writes" commingled recyclable" as k ming ld risaikl b l. My own pronunciation would slightly differ phonemically because I speak a Northern New Hampshire dialect of English. My own pronunciation would be closer to komingld risaikl blz.

A discovery made by phoneticians is that we tend to "assimilate" language in order to make articulation of sound easier. We assimilate sounds by changing them to sound more like "adjacent" sounds (Callary 324). An example in "commingled recyclables" is the way k and l are run together when we say recyclables. We do not push air out of our mouths when we say the k like we would in kite, instead, we pronounce the k more like a g--we glide the tongue off the alveolar ridge (front of the palate) into the l sound. Even so, this k-l combination is awkward. This is why I feel some of you have said that commingled recyclables is a "clumsy" word; it is a clumsy word in the mouth.

There is a word for the different ways one sound can be articulated: allomorphs. Our word phrase has an excellent example of an allomorph. Say "commingled recyclables" out loud with your hand in front of your mouth without changing the way you would say the word normally. Pay attention to the air stream on your hand. Did you feel a difference between how much air blew on your hand for the first c of commingled and the second c of recyclables? Both are phonetically written and pronounced like the c in cat, but the articulation, as evidenced by the airstream, is different.

While I am on the subjects of c's, let me mention this. When members of our club first saw "commingled

recylables," it was a word written on the side of a trash can; it was not something we heard, and yet we all pronounced it very similarly. Everyone somehow "knew" to pronounce two of the c's as they would be in cat and the other c as it is pronounced in circus. Halle believes "the only reasonable account of how speakers come to know these principles (English word structures) is to attribute them not to external factors but to innate mechanisms involved in memorizing words--that is, to assume that our minds are so constructed that when we memorize words, we automatically also abstract their structural principles" (338).

It this innate ability to understand and use new words according to rules and structure that becomes the ultimate test for whether a word belongs in the English language. The trash can with the sign "commingled recyclables" is on a campus that consists mostly of English speakers. With the exception of our dear leader and guide, Dr. Chisholm, no one goes around pointing out this sign, explaining it to us. Yet, we all believe this word means that we should put things in the bucket that we would like to have recycled. One look in the bucket shows that this is just what is in the bucket: a mixture of products to be recycled, and since there seem to be no campus memos or other signs explaining that students are putting the wrong products in these buckets, then we must be assuming correctly.

We, English speaking people, read and understand "commingled recyclables" as an English word and act accordingly; we put the right kind of trash in the can. Really, I think that is the best test yet to show that "commingled recyclables" is an English word.

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An Investigation of Gender Through Writing

By Jane E. Babin and Daniel P. Moore

Whether taking notes in class, answering essay exams, jotting down notes in a journal, or composing out-of-class assignments, writing is the act by which students symbolize their beliefs, feelings, and intentions. It is through writing that students create a record of their thoughts. The purpose of this article is to explain how we used these "records" to investigate student views toward gender in the workplace.

Recognizing that writing exercises often operate in many different dimensions, we developed an assignment which was used in three ways. First, it advanced technical writing skills by requiring students to grapple with word choice, sentence construction, and paragraph structure in order to accurately communicate their ideas and substantiate their arguments. Secondly, because the assignment dealt with the application of specific course materials, it challenged students to recall, utilize, and integrate the concepts they had been exposed to through lecture and reading. Finally, the finished assignment was used as a position of record. Students were required, in class, to revisit and rethink their views, as written, from another perspective. Our desire was to use this third goal of the assignment to investigate students' views toward gender issues in the workplace.

As the number of working women steadily increases, teachers, researchers and students have been examining the similarities and differences in various aspects of

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the job and career experiences of men and women (Hall, 1986). However, from the work we have done in studying the gender issue using written assignments, making gender the intended or immediate focus of such assignments tends to bias subsequent discussions. Students will often tailor their writing to what they perceive to be the "politically correct," sanctioned position of the instructor or their classmates. Many times they fail to understand or to properly analyze their own position on a given issue. Students are often concerned with appearing correct, as correct is defined by the majority, and, therefore, they refuse to define what they truly believe or feel.

Our exercise explores the gender issue by having students role-play a common managerial situation in which they must communicate, in writing, to both a subordinate and a superior. The exercise includes, within a situational context, a number of incidental gender issues. The goal is to have students write memos to both employee and supervisor, focusing on the message to be communicated to each. In class, we then review and revisit these records of their thoughts through a filter which highlights gender in order to investigate gender differences in these communications and to offer possible explanations of these differences.

Let's now explore the assignment we used in our classes, starting with the assignment itself. We will then explain how we structured our class sessions in order to discuss the assignment from the gender perspective, offering examples of students' writings to highlight the variety of gender interpretations. Finally, we will conclude with some of our own thoughts on what we have learned from this study of voice variation, which we presented at the Organizational Behavior Teaching

Conference at LaSalle University in March of 1994.

The Exercise

The exercise presented to our students consisted of a case study in which the students were to role-play a woman middle manager and draft memos to a woman superior and a male subordinate. We analyzed the memos to determine if there were variations in voice and content of the memos depending on whether they had been written by a male or female student. Below are the directions and the case which we presented to the students:

Directions

The following case describes a rather typical situation for middle managers, that of communicating with superiors and subordinates. Assume that you are Meg Davis, a 32-year-old regional sales manager for an innovative computer software company. Using the information available, write two memos. The first is to your subordinate, John Rollins, and the second to Sara Lewis, Vice President of Sales.

The Case

Meg Davis works for ARK, a state of the art computer software design company that continues to face increasing market pressure. Meg joined ARK seven years ago after finishing a masters degree in mathematics. She received numerous promotions and currently works as the Sales Manager for the Eastern Region.

John Rollins is twenty-four years old, a recent graduate with a BS degree in Marketing, and a relatively new ARK employee (less than 2 years).

He works as a sales associate and reports to Meg. John indicated to Meg his desire for advancement. He feels he needs the greater challenge of the position as District Coordinator for Sales to Higher Education in order to grow and develop at ARK. John believes that his extensive experience as the National Membership Representative for his college fraternity and his two years of sales work for ARK make him uniquely qualified for this position.

Sarah Lewis is Vice President of Sales and Meg's immediate supervisor. Lewis was just recently hired. She is the first woman to hold an executive level position at ARK, and, in the short time that she has been with the company, has earned the reputation as a straight, by the book, no excuses, strictly performance-oriented manager. Lewis often refers to herself as having many faults but that being wrong is not one of them.

Meg has just received the quarterly sales figures for her region. They are above last quarter's but below quota. Particularly troubling are John Rollins' results which are markedly lower than last quarter's actuals. Despite John's apparent enthusiasm and his good sales call record, he has not been able to close important new sales contracts. Meg attributes part of the problem to the new sales training program which has been enthusiastically endorsed by Lewis, the VP of Sales. This new approach to sales changes the company's emphasis from customer support to product characteristics.

As a regional sales manager, Meg is responsible for reviewing sales figures and communicating results,

with suggestions for needed improvements, to employees. Meg is also to communicate to Lewis her interpretation of the region's performance, to describe her responses, and to make recommendations for promotions.

The Class Review Session

We used this exercise in two undergraduate classes. One is Personnel Management, a required management course for Human Resource Option management majors. The other course is an integrative course, Work and Identity, composed of both business and liberal arts students. It was interesting to discuss with our students their different perspectives on this assignment. Since some of these students are in the business curriculum, many of them used proper format when drafting their memos. These students had had prior memo drafting experience in the Business Communications course. This had also exposed them to a particular style of communication which may have had some effect on the way the memos read.

One of the things that we were attempting to discover from the students' memos was whether there was consistency in voice variations depending upon a student's gender. It is interesting to note that a majority of the male students in the class expressed the fact that they would simply have told John that he had not met the sales quota and failed to close new accounts, so, consequently, he was not eligible for promotion to District Coordinator. Yet, in attempting to communicate that message, their memos reflected more of a "build him up, let him down, give him hope" style. This is a much more nurturing, caring style, hence, appearing to be the more stereotypically female form of communication. What the male students said they would do and

what they actually wrote are much different. For instance, read the following memo written by a male student:

> Interoffice Memo
> To: John Rollins
> From: Meg Davis
> Date: March 1, 1994
> Subject: Position Request
>
> Thank you, John, for your enthusiastic offer for the position of District Coordinator for Sales to Higher Education. You have been a hard worker here at ARKand have been beneficial to our success. Being DistrictCoordinator for Sales to Higher Education is a position of great responsibility. In order to give such a promotion, an employee must not only have great enthusiasm but the results to show for it. You have a good sales call record, but there were some importantnew sales contracts that you did not close. If you can show that you can close these new accounts in the future, I will seriously consider promoting you.Keep up the good work.

This does not reflect the attitude of the men in the class who verbalized the position of, "I'd just fire him if he wasn't performing." So just what was happening? Why were the students saying one thing and writing something very different? Did the male students verbally communicate a very hard line position regarding John because they perceived that to be the "correct" answer to, and the proper management style for, resolving the problem? Perhaps subconsciously the male students wrote the memos in a certain style because they were role-playing a woman.

In discussing the memos with the students, we looked at the different dimensions of communication and style. We talked first about individual style--that dimension which makes a person a communicator. Individual style dictates the *way* someone communicates, i.e., the words chosen to express an idea, the order of thoughts expressed, the harshness or softness of tone. It is often that which makes a writer a brilliant author, a savvy reporter, or a magical lyricist.

We all as communicators have individual style. It is the "thumb print" of our thoughts and imaginations. The memos we received from the students were as varied in tone and words and thoughts expressed as the patterns of snowflakes. And yet, there were some common threads which ran through them.

Part of the exploration of the exercise was to ask the students why there were common threads of style evidenced in their writings. Some students said that the fact they were all role-playing a particular person, namely, a middle manager, had some bearing on how they expressed themselves. That is, to get into the role-play, you must try to surrender your own individual style for the style of the person you are inhabiting. They were forced to think like a middle manager and not as a student without manager experience.

This is where our discussion led to a second dimension of communication, namely, the intended **receiver** of the information. Remember that the students were asked to draft two memos: one to John, the employee looking forward to promotion, and one to Sarah, Meg's superior, to tell her that the salespersons' training program was not achieving its expected results.

Now the object of the discussion became: Are there

different styles of communication based on who is to receive the communication? Most of the students agreed that one must be aware of the political nuances (and potential for future career advancement!) when writing a memo to a superior, and more aware of the potential to damage ego, and thus productivity, when communicating to a subordinate. The students did not think that it mattered that Meg's superior is female, or that her subordinate is male, i.e., the style of communication and what was said would be the same regardless of the gender of the receivers.

However, in analyzing the memos we had received from our students, we detected some subtle differences in the style and tone. For instance, one female student, when writing to Sarah, the Vice-President of Sales, regarding the newly implemented training program, expressed the fact that she was soliciting suggestions from the employees on how the program might be improved. She recognized that it is the salespeople who exhibit a company's good or bad sales training program, and, therefore, the company must give the employees the opportunity to make comments on how to improve it.

Two of the male students took quite a different approach. In their memos to Sarah, instead of calling for employee feedback on the program and asking for suggestions for improvement, they **told** Sarah what the problem was with the program and tried to sell her their own ideas on how to fix it. Was male domination of the situation surfacing in the memos even though everyone was assigned to the same role-play?

This leads into the last dimension of communication which is the social element. That is, are there societal expectations of the way we communicate given the topic of the communication and the forum in which

we are expressing ourselves? Here we can explore many different aspects of this dimension, from the institutional or organizational expectations of writing and communication styles, to the potential stereotyping of what "good" communication is.

Is there a gender specific style of management and managerial communications that has dominated American business and culture since the beginning? What are organizations' expectations of management style? Have we as educators, businesspersons and students been conditioned to believe that there is only one way to manage, and do we expect the ever increasing female work population to follow this stereotype?

If we accept the theory that men and women communicate differently, then we accept that there is a woman's perspective in communications that may have been ignored in the business world. Given that statement, then a question surrounding this exercise is: "Did the students take this woman's perspective into account when role-playing a female middle manager and when writing memos to both superior and subordinate? Was gender an issue at all in this situational interaction? Perhaps gender was not recognized as an issue because we have all been conditioned to react as a male manager would react, communicate as a male manager would communicate. Now the analysis becomes, do we see woman communicating in a "man's" language?

Our experience using this exercise was that the students were aware of gender in the case. However, the women generally considered gender to be important. There seemed to be a strong gender association for females. The fact that the students were role-playing a woman in this assignment was enough for most females to be conscious of gender.

On the other hand, male students tended to view the case as gender neutral, i.e., another management dilemma needing resolution. As one male student commented, "a manager is a manager no matter what sex **he** is." Interestingly, during discussion, the question was posed, "Well, what if the characters had been described as only managers A, B, and C; would gender be an issue?" The responses varied, but females resolutely cycled back to the position that if this was assigned as management role-play and they were asked to play a manager's role, then gender would be an issue. It was as if females were refuting the male notion of a gender neutral world of management. For these women, management was genderized.

Conclusion

The goal of our exercise was to get the students to investigate gender issues. When they assumed a role and wrote from that perspective, they gained an understanding of the thoughts, feelings, beliefs, experiences, indeed, the very personality of the "other." Furthermore, when male and female students engaged in discussions about what they had written, they were able to reassess their views and differences towards gender roles in the workplace. It is this writing and review process which has provided insights into the way men and women communicate. Therefore, it is our conclusion that writing assignments can provide a meaningful exploration of gender.

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Incorporating Writing into a General Education Historical Geology Course

by Larry T. Spencer

It has often been stated that you never realize how little you know about a subject until you try to explain that subject to another person either orally or in writing. In a similar manner it has been said that if you want to learn something, teach it to another person. If the subject matter is in the student's major, it is easy to motivate the student to learn not only the content, but also the relationship of the content to the whole subject field. What if the content area is not in the student's major, but part of the college's general education requirements? As a faculty person who strongly supports the concept of general education requirements, I have given a great deal of thought as to how I might get students to not only learn the content, but to develop a broader understanding. I believe that one way to accomplish this goal is to have students read non-text materials and then to have them write about what they have read.

Sometimes it is difficult to know how to write about something, unless you know how other people have accomplished the same task. In the exercises that will be described in this paper, I have students in a lower level, general education class entitled Historical Geology read three different kinds of scientific writing. Although I don't expect them to emulate any one particular style, I believe that by having them read three different styles in which scientific concepts are presented, they might come to recognize that not only are there different audiences for a particular subject area, but also that

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there are different approaches to reaching each group of readers and that they might be able to apply some of these techniques in their own writing.

Although there are more than three types of scientific
writing, I concentrate on three forms: articles by scientists on their own results for peers in their disciplines, articles by journalists or scientists reporting about science in scientifically oriented journals, and articles about science by scientists or journalists that appear in newspapers or newsmagazines. Typically the first type would be found in the journals published by scientific groups, e.g., *Science* published by the American Association for the Advancement of Science. The second type would be found in magazines such as *Scientific American* or *Discover* magazine. The last would be found in newspapers such as the *Boston Globe* or news magazines such as *Newsweek* or *Time*.

The format of each exercise is approximately the same. The students are given an exercise sheet, usually on a Monday. The sheet specifies the type of article to be read, a series of questions the student should think about as he/she reads it and which should form the basis of the two to three page essay to be turned in on the following Monday. I ask that the student make a Xerox copy of the article and that the copy be turned in with the essay. I do this for a number of reasons. First by asking them for a Xerox copy, the student will not tear an article out of a journal for his/her own use. Secondly, when I read the article and compare it to what has been turned in, I can see how much sense the student was able to make of it. Lastly, as most of the articles are from current issues, the exercise keeps me abreast of what is going on in the field.

All articles used in the class are chosen by the stu-

dents themselves. I feel there needs to be a follow-up to the search techniques learned either in the library component of the Introduction to the Academic Community course or the English Composition course, or perhaps both if the student has had both by the time they take the Historical Geology class. Occasionally when students really get stuck I will either give them an article or go through the search process with them. I can tell when they are having such problems, because before they ever begin writing I ask to see the article or at least the title and journal of the article.

The questions to be considered vary depending upon the type of article. For example, for the scientific report, I ask the following:

1. What hypothesis or hypotheses were being tested?
2. What assumptions were made by the scientists?
3. What kinds of tools, material or mathematical, were used by the scientists?
4. What were the main findings of the report?
5. What specific pages or sections of their own text considered the topic, and if the concept or concepts were in the text, were there discrepancies between the article and the text?
6. What aspects made the article difficult to read? If it was the vocabulary used, then list those words. Could you tell the meaning by context, or did you have to look them up in your own text or a dictionary of scientific terms?

For the scientific report I ask them some of the same questions, but in addition ask them to compare the scientific report to the previous paper. For the last exercise I ask most of the same questions, but now the comparison is amongst all three types of articles.

Students find the first exercise, reading and writing about a scientific paper, the most difficult. First, they

have difficulties identifying a scientific paper, which I describe to them as when a scientist reports upon his/her own research. Typically most students initially bring in articles in which a scientist or journalist describes a series of researches dealing with a particular topic. At this point I tell them to save the article for the next exercise and to go back to the library to search some more. What is interesting is that in oral and written directions I specifically tell them to only look for articles that appear in the last section of *Science* magazine. Apparently, they either don't listen to me or cannot read my prose, or perhaps didn't even believe I meant what I said. In any case, about 50% get it right the first time, 35% the second time, and 15% the third time. Secondly, the vocabulary and often even the subject matter is way beyond their comprehension. Rather than tell them to choose a new article I tell them to persevere and to look for the major points. Often the problem is that they have only read the article once. I mention that even in my own reading of journal articles, I often have to re-read an article to make sense of it. I also urge them to use their textbook as a reference source. The difficulties that they have initially with this exercise imply to me that with most of their reading requirements, they feel they only need to read the material once and that perhaps this exercise is a good lesson to dispel that myth. Many students mention that the 'aha' feeling comes after a third or fourth reading.

I have tried reversing the first assignment, the scientific article, and the last exercise, the newspaper/news magazine article, but there are a few reason why I don't usually do it that way. One of my main reasons for starting with the most difficult task first is that it helps students to self-select the class. This exercise is given before the drop period and if students find it

too difficult, I encourage them to drop the class before they flunk it. Secondly, by the time we get to the newspaper exercise, it is towards the end of the semester and things seem to be piling up. Having done the two previous exercises and knowing what I expected for each, most of the students have little difficulty in finding a newspaper article and writing about it.

When it comes to grading, my philosophy is that each student must complete a set number of requirements. If they complete all requirements in a satisfactory manner, they will get a grade of C for the class. One of these requirements is to do all the writing exercises. When I read what they submit for this component, I grade the work as either satisfactory or not. If it is the latter, the student has to re-do his/her paper. On the first exercise, this typically amounts to 50% or more of the class. On some occasions, I have even had a student take four times to get through the first exercise. Typically by the last exercise, few if any have to re-do their essay. I used to make all students read three books, keep journals on what they read, and write essays about each book. Because of a change in testing methods, I moved to the three exercises described in this paper and use extra books and essays as a way for a student to achieve a grade higher than a C for the class. Interestingly enough, few students opt to do the extra work required to get a grade higher than a C. Usually on the day that the students pass in their work, I ask each student to summarize his/her article for the rest of the class. This has a multiplier effect for science content and also forces the student to orally indicate his/her understanding of the topic of the article.

Do the students know more about historical geology after they have completed this component of the course? This is hard to determine as I have never formally

assessed the outcomes. I do know that by the time the students turn in the third exercise, they have learned to follow directions and their essays read much better and make more sense. The students complain about the workload, but when I remind them that in the real workplace there are no multiple choice tests, but only position papers, memos, precis, reports, etc., they usually reluctantly nod their heads in agreement.

The method I described above to incorporate writing into a general education course may at first glance seem to be a lot of work for me, but it really isn't. The papers are all very short. I read them mostly for content rather than grammar and structure, although I tell the students that I will quit reading a paper if the spelling, grammar, etc., is too atrocious. Having to read the articles along with the essays may also seem like more work for me, but I would have to read the articles anyway if I wanted to keep up with what is happening in the field and often I have already read the article and thus only need to skim through it.

Although much effort goes into the making of a modern day textbook, if the only knowledge a student has of a subject field is through what they have read in the text, they will not have a full understanding of that subject area. Conversations with my students, after they have completed the three exercises, indicate to me that they have gained a better understanding of not only the content of science, but also the way in which that content is communicated to scientists, non-scientists who enjoy science, and the general public. At the same time they also have a better understanding of the limitations of textbooks as vehicles for communicating the 'general education aspects' of a general education science course.

The Difficulties of Getting Started Writing

by Dick Hage

Editor's note: Look for this one next year!

In Defense of Storytelling

by Meg Peterson-Gonzalez

For as long as I can remember, my mother has told stories. Whenever I call her, she is always ready with new ones. One of her latest concerns my niece Sarah, who was so glad to finally turn four because being three "just lasted forever." I spoke with my mother once about a friend who had decided never to have children. She thought it a great loss because children "fill your life with stories." She tells stories, not only about her children, and now her grandchildren, but about every incident in her life. Through stories, she makes sense of her experience and communicates that sense to others.

Storytelling is a very human characteristic. Perhaps it is what sets us apart from other forms of life (Morton 1). In our stories, we frame our experience, manipulate it, give it focus and create meanings which guide us in meeting new experiences. Through the stories we create, we make meaning in and of the world.

Traditionally, composition instruction has been dedicated, as it is at Plymouth State, to "themes of exposition." Composition instuctors seem to accept the implicit assumption that fiction has no place in college writing instruction outside of "creative writing." To many, even personal narrative is suspect because of its similarity to stories. The implication is that narrative of any sort only serves to distract us from the serious business of academic
writing.

Plymouth State College is not the only place where the split between "expository" and "creative" writing is enforced. Expository writing is felt to be more aca-

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demic, more serious, more worthy of attention. Most narrative tends to get shunted off to the "creative writing ghetto." In many settings, creative writing is regarded as an easy, even frivolous, course— after all, it's imagination, so anything goes. How could we maintain standards?

To me, this split seems artificial. What writing is not creative? Whether a lab report, a persuasive essay or a short story, writing involves a mind in the act of creation.

Neither can we say that narrative, whether personal, fictional or both, is frivolous. I have found it to be every bit as serious, and, in its own way, as rigorous and demanding, as any other form of academic writing.

The same type of crafting goes on in narrative writing as in expository prose. The writer still needs to gather information. The details need to be as specific as the statistics compiled for a research paper, because they must convince the reader to be drawn into the narrative world. The narrative still needs to have a focus or a thesis, although it may not be as explicitly stated as in an expository piece. This creates even greater challenge and greater demand to show rather than tell. The narrative has to be constructed so every element supports the main focus.

Narrative must be carefully crafted. Even in a piece based on personal experience, the writer makes decisions. She must arrive at a focus, decide where to begin and end, decide what to include and how to structure the piece. Experiences do not come to us as narrative. Students may start out with this misconception ("I'll just write about my weekend."), but they soon change their minds when they receive bland non-committal responses from their peers and even find themselves responding

to their own drafts with "So what?" We don't need a particular type of writing to teach the writing process.

Neither do we need a particular type of writing to evaluate products. Each semester I have my Composition class brainstorm the "qualities of good writing," and we never have trouble generating a list which applies equally well to narrative and expository writing.

In my Introduction to Literature course, I allow for a wide range of written response to literature. I stress what Donna Qualley refers to as "reader-based" papers (121). Many have chosen to respond to works with personal narrative. In response to published stories, they tell their own. Charlene wrote of her own abortion and the aftermath in response to poems about abortion by Gwendolyn Brooks, Anne Sexton and Lucille Clifton. In response to "Customs of the Country," a short story by Madison Smartt Bell (16-27) in which a woman tries to make up for past neglect and get her son back, Aaron weaves a gripping tale of his own feelings of abandonment when he was placed in foster care by his mother at the age of four. He tells his story--shadowy memories of Her, his mother--and concludes:

> Who's going to give me the answers to what it is I'm looking for? Do I want Alma the lunch lady to tell me why She gave up? Or do I want my roommate to tell me where She is now? Better yet, why don't you tell me how I should forgive Her and move on? And in return, I'll tell Davy from "Customs of the Country" why his mother beat him up and why now he's got parents who will carry him off to bed after Joan Baez finishes on Romper Room. Yes, there is anger,

> spite and overwhelming resentment--the kind that tastes like sour milk and melts the pen as the truth flows from it. Yes there will always be the unanswered questions and curiosities as to what might have happened if She had accepted the challenge. The narrator in "Customs of the Country" accepts the challenge and because of this I have a hard time relating to her. I bless her for not giving in and for her attempt to get her son back. I can, however, relate to Davy and all the Davys who may have those questions and curiosities which will never be answered. To those who feel the anger, spite and resentment, I say there is acceptance, but as the narrator says, "There is no forgiveness."

In his paper, Aaron contrasts his experience with that of the boy in the story, and his mother with the narrator of the story. In his highly personal voice, he not only exposes the main issues in the story, but uses them to better understand his own feelings.

Not all stories are as personal and powerful as Aaron's, but they don't need to be to enrich our understanding. I once ran a study group for high school students who were having a hard time with chemistry. What stories we told! Each night we would meet and try to frame our narratives around electron worlds. It worked. It was, in fact, the only way for us to make sense of chemistry.

When I was working for the Peace Corps in the Dominican Republic, we used to have the trainees write narratives in Spanish (Life Learning Experiences) creating small stories out of their encounters with Dominican culture. One volunteer wrote of feeling overwhelmed by the difference in cultures separating her from Dominican women:

> Culture shock. A definite experience this past weekend. This happened while I was sitting in a kitchen with other women and recognized that they didn't have anything in common with me. They must think I am very strange. Here I am.. no family here, no husband, no children-- all that these women consider important. How could I explain to them that I consider learning about other cultures important? And that I am not sure about marriage? That I want to live independently? For these women, life is children, family, husbands. I am very different from them. I am sure they cannot understand me. (English translation)

Diane's story exposes a central conflict between her desire to be true to who she is and her need for connection in her new culture.

Another volunteer writes of her visit to a dying pueblo. She relates the experience and tries to make sense of it.

"There is no water for agriculture."

"Some days we don't eat anything."

"We cannot plant because there is no rain and soil has too many rocks."

"The children have parasites."

"There is no work."

"There is only one well."

"Some of the children eat dirt."

> Friday, Doris, the supervisor of the health promoters, and I went to Media Cara, a campo near Pedro Corto. We visited every house and talked with the people about health and their lives.

> Media Cara is a beautiful place--higher ground than Pedro Corto, close to the mountains, with space where horses and cows graze. But the people are barely surviving and some are not. The families don't have enough food to eat every meal and the parasites are eating the children. The parasites are so common that the mothers don't think of them as an illness. "We don't have illnesses here--only parasites."
>
> In the face of this, somehow, the spirit of the majority of the people is still alive. They keep clean houses and strive for beauty--some flowerpots with plants on the walls or a picture of a saint. It is enough to say that life is worth it. (English translation)

In this story, Maggie struggled in her attempt to make sense of the things she had seen in Media Cara. In her revisions of the story, she created new meaning. She decided to focus not on the hopelessness of what she had seen but on the triumph of the human spirit visible in the small touches residents of Media Cara added to make their houses into homes.

Diane and Maggie struggled, through their stories, to make sense of both the language and the new culture in which they were to live.

Sometimes my literature students create fictional pieces in response to themes in the texts they read. In response to Gloria Steinam's essay "Sisterhood," Alicia creates a tale of closeness and betrayal about best friends who grow up together sharing every confidence until they are separated by boyfriends. For the racism unit, Shawn writes a story about a boy who walks with his father through the black section of town and feels the first chill of his own racism as he contrasts what

he finds in darkness and light.

I was struck, as I read these pieces, by how the stories, even when they did not mention particular works, served to intensify and clarify the meanings found in the texts better than a more traditional literary analysis would have. Perhaps, paradoxically, by telling one particular story in the full richness of all its detail we become more general in our implications. We need to value our stories, from the anecdotes and examples that bring life to an expository text to the extended narratives we use to frame experience--the stories we tell ourselves in order to bring order and meaning to our lives.

Stories are not extras, not meaningless little forays into make-believe worlds, good only for recreation—but something much more fundamental. They are how we understand. They can help us make sense of chemistry, literature, and other academic pursuits, and, as my mother so well knows, of life.

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Teaching Writing to Students with Learning Disabilities

by Bruce Johnson

In order to meet the needs of students with learning disabilities, I have made some changes in the way I teach writing to composition students. I used to teach writing as a process stressing drafts and revisions, but I now teach writing as a process stressing prewriting activities and a more step-by-step approach including drafts and revisions. The new model centers around individualized education, helps each student concentrate on areas of need, and encourages all students towards their own limits. For example, the student with a learning disability who needs more help with brainstorming activities in order to begin writing can concentrate more on brainstorming activities. In another example, the student with a learning disability who needs more help with seeing connections can concentrate more on the outlining steps. These changes were first made in order to assist the student with a learning disability, but what I have learned recently is that what works best for a student with a learning disability also works well for the majority of other students. Most students benefit from writing as a process including the prewriting activities and other various steps.

First of all, I encourage students to use a writing process which includes: brainstorming ideas, creating a focus line, and writing an outline, first draft, revisions, and additional drafts and revisions as needed.

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Students are free to tailor this process to their own desires, but for the student with a learning disability, the structure is important. This structure offers the student a way to approach writing as a step-by-step assignment, or put in another way, mini assignments. When the first step is complete, the student moves on to the second step. Instead of seeing one huge assignment, the student, particularly the student with difficulty processing information or a short attention span, sees many different, smaller, easier to manage and easier to complete, assignments.

When a student receives a new assignment, whether a composition assignment or a writing assignment in another discipline, the first step is to understand the assignment. For a student with a learning disability, it is important that the assignment be presented in both oral and written form. Some students are auditory learners, meaning they learn best by listening, and some students are visual learners, meaning they learn best by seeing, yet most students are a combination of auditory and visual learners and learn best by a combination of hearing and seeing. Assignments presented in a step-by-step fashion, even using numbers, first, second, and third, help students decipher what needs to be accomplished.

Next, the student begins to brainstorm possible paper topics or answers to the assignment. This allows the student with a learning disability, particularly the student with difficulty storing, processing, or producing information, as well as the student who has difficulty with poor memory, to see that he/she has useable ideas he/she didn't even know he/she had. Brainstorming can be a simple list of answers, or it can

be a lengthy freewrite, writing down all of the information previously known about the topic. Students are free to write down any responses, correct or incorrect, but are encouraged to write down responses. Soon, the list becomes lengthy, and the student can use what's neede and throw out what's not needed. For some students, however, this list may become too lengthy, and students may need additional help on how to use the written information. Still, the process of writing unused ideas oftentimes leads to the best ideas, and therefore this brainstorming becomes necessary.

One particular LD student who seemed to have difficulty storing information, difficulty processing information, and a poor memory needed additional help on brainstorming ideas and then using those brainstormed ideas. She often sat down at the computer keyboard and said, "I had this terrific idea on the way to class, but now I can't remember it," or "I have these wonderful thoughts, but I don't know how to write them down." She needed to learn strategies to help her retrieve her thoughts. Brainstorming became a particularly important step in her writing process. Once she was able to learn how to start with writing down related ideas, she found she was able to eventually retrieve the ideas she had lost or the thoughts she had wanted to share.

With the list of brainstormed ideas, the student is ready to create a focus line. Donald Murray defines the focus line as "the words writers use to record the focus, the starting point of the writing process" (41). The focus line can be a basic sentence beginning with "This paper is about..." and continuing with a short answer. The sentence is not meant to be used in the

paper, although if worded appropriately can be used, but instead is used by the writer as a guide of what to include in the paper. This focus line is particularly important for the student with difficulty producing information and discriminating ideas because the student then has, in his/her own mind, a main idea as to what his/her paper is about. The student can then proceed while keeping in mind a focus and can create answers to the assignment and complete a first draft with a clear focus. In addition, in revising the paper, the student can look back at the focus statement, point to each paragraph, and ask, "Does this paragraph, or this information, relate to my focus?" The student has something tangible to point at, something to look for, a purpose when revising.

Another LD student who seemed to have difficulty producing ideas and discriminating between main ideas, details, and what's important and what's not important, needed extra help with focusing. She enjoyed writing, and therefore, she wrote on and on, trying to answer the assigned questions, and hoping that eventually she would answer the questions. In short, she was channeling her writing energies in nonproductive areas. She needed to learn to determine a focus line designed to answer the assigned questions, and then while brainstorming, outlining, writing and revising, be sure that all of her thoughts related to that focus line. Eventually, instead of writing on and on, she started writing only what was important and only what would answer the assignment.

In the next step, the student is ready to create an outline. Many students are comfortable with standard outline format, with Roman numeral I, capital A, etc. This may be too confusing for the student with process-

ing information difficulties or sensory problems, and many other outline formats may produce a better, more manageable visual. For example, a simple list 1, 2, 3, or beginning, middle, and end, may be best. Another possible outline includes folding a paper in half vertically, writing main ideas in the left column, and matching appropriate details in the right column. This helps the student see that his/her paper has a beginning, middle, and end, plus helps the student begin to see paragraph groupings, connections, and transitions. An additional possibility, a variation of the outline, is a word map, consisting of main ideas in the middle of the page and details connected with lines. This, too, helps the student see a whole picture plus paragraph groupings, connections, and transitions.

Another LD student who seemed to have difficulty processing information needed extra help with the outlining step. Because most writing assignments took him longer to complete than his peers, he was concentrating on drafting, quick revisions, and drafting again, convinced that this was the most important part of writing a paper. He basically spent his writing time copying or typing papers but not making major improvements. Although he was putting in tremendous effort, his attempts were channeled poorly. I started working with him on prewriting activities, brainstorming ideas, seeing connections, creating a simple outline, seeing more connections, and writing the first draft. It was the effort put into the outlining step which helped him the most. He was able to see that the amount of time he used to spend writing the first draft, he could now spend writing an outline. By concentrating on one step at a time, he was able to answer the assigned questions, confident his answers were correct, without

worrying about writing skills. When the outline was complete, he was able to double check his answers, and then he was able to check for main ideas, details, support, examples, and so on. Soon, he began spending more time on the outlining step of the writing process, less on drafting and revising, and he began seeing his papers improve. With this student, we used to joke that once the outline was completed, the paper was just about completed also.

With an outline in hand, the student is ready to work on the first draft which becomes a systematic step-by-step process of following the outline carefully. The student is free to deviate from the outline, add additional ideas, make changes, and so on, but the comfort of having ideas written down makes the first draft writing task more manageable. Instead of working on both ideas and writing skills at the same time, the student with difficulty storing, processing, or producing information, or the student with a short attention span or difficulty following directions, is concentrating on one task at a time, and here is concentrating on drafting skills.

With a first draft completed, the student is ready for editing and revising. At first, I provide students with a suggested checklist of what to look for. Many students tend to concentrate on grammatical mistakes, the easy corrections, such as spelling, punctuation, and so forth. I encourage students to look more deeply, double check the focus statement, look for opening paragraphs, look for main ideas and details, adding support, getting the point across, transitions, etc. At the same time, I suggest students choose one area to review at a time, for example, concentrate on checking whether the paper follows a focus statement, then concentrate

on checking whether the paper has an exciting opening. This helps the student with difficulties related to processing information or short attention span concentrate on the parts of the paper as opposed to being overwhelmed with the entire whole of the paper. This is a special concern to these students because they often see writing activities as jumbled puzzles requiring too much to do and asking themselves: "Where do I start?" or "Where do I go from here?" Seeing the paper in parts and fitting the parts together as a whole, helps these students see these papers as manageable pieces of work.

Additional drafts may be necessary. Sometimes one more draft is sufficient, and sometimes many more drafts are needed. Between drafts, the student needs to continue editing and revising. At some point, it is important for the student with a learning disability to participate in peer revisions. This involves students reading and revising peer work and at the same time, having peers revising their work. By revising someone else's paper, the student with a learning disability can see examples of alternative writing and consider using some of those same techniques in his/her writing. Similarly, by having someone else revise his/her paper, the student with a learning disability may learn that there are many different ways to write papers. This use of modeling and examples is particularly important to the student with a learning disability because this student needs to be exposed to a variety of learning strategies, and learning by seeing becomes another such strategy. Again, students are instructed to choose one, sometimes two or three, areas of writing to concentrate on while revising. Students continue this spiral process of drafting, editing, revising, and drafting, editing,

revising, and drafting, editing, and revising, until the assignment is finally determined to be the best work possible.

Teaching composition with the use of the computer as a writing tool in a computer laboratory yields additional benefits to the student with a learning disability. During the early stages of the writing process, the student is able to type up a first draft, print out, and most important for the student with eye-hand coordination and poor handwriting skills, then be able to read a neatly printed, double spaced paper, presenting an appropriate visual to read and work with. Once the first draft is typed and saved, the student then saves time, and instead of spending extra hours retyping drafts, is able to spend quality time making changes on the saved document and then reprint. This is especially important to the student with difficulty processing information because assignments often take more time than allotted, and by saving time on menial tasks such as rewriting and retyping, the student can spend more time on productive content tasks. For example, a student with processing or sequencing difficulties, instead of spending wasteful time typing or retyping, is able to spend quality time changing sentence or paragraph order easily by using computer commands. Most beneficial for the student with spelling difficulties or difficulties discriminating between different letters and sounds, is the use of the computer program spellcheckers in improving papers. Basically, students need to learn to spell the beginning of a word correctly, or spell a word close to the intended word, and the spellchecker becomes the tool to use for corrections.

The encouragement of a writing process is important, but what's most important is teacher contact

with students. The student with a learning disability often needs to be reassured that he/she is on the right track and that he/she has various successful ideas and writing skills. Some students with learning disabilities have traditionally not been successful in school, or have had unpleasant experiences in school, leading to a need for individual contact to boost confidence. I prefer teaching composition in a workshop setting which allows some class discussion and sharing of ideas, but also allows students the opportunity to work in class, and therefore, allows me the chance to meet and assist each student individually every session. If the student needs the assignment broken down into even smaller steps, I can do that. Similarly, if the student needs additional help brainstorming ideas, creating a focus line, writing an outline, first draft, revising, or whatever, I can do that on a one-to-one basis. Most importantly, I can monitor each student's needs and tailor my instruction to meet those needs.

Many colleges today have support services available to students. Plymouth State College offers such services through the Plymouth Academic Support Services program which offers the student with a learning disability the opportunity to learn about his/her disability and apply this knowledge to academics. The services are available to students but are also available to instructors needing assistance in working with the student with a learning disability. Jeanne Rudzinski is the contact person. She can be reached at 535-2270.

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Teaching the Elephants to Tango

by Michael J. Brien

The New Hampshire Job Training Council asked me to teach a college level composition class to AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) participants in their FIP 4 JOBS (Family Independence Program For Job Opportunities and Basic Skills) Program who were in need of such a course prior to their entering one of the Council's Tuition Assisted college degree programs. I was excited about the possibility, and was immediately drawn to the metaphor James Belasco uses in his rather slim-volumed book, *Teaching The Elephant to Dance: The Manager's Guide to Empowering Change*.

In the book, James Belasco recounts a story of a young elephant who is trained for the circus by his being shackled with heavy chains to deeply embedded stakes. As the elephant grows, he does not resist the chains even though he now has the power to break free of them. His conditioning has limited his movement.

I wanted to explore the conditioning of these welfare clients, and get them to believe that through observation and empowerment skills that could be developed by the writing process they might begin to change the way they saw themselves, and perhaps in the way case technicians, managers, and social workers, viewed them. Thus, unlike the circus elephants, they could realize the innate weakness in the flimsy manacles that they thought held them back.

Seven clients signed up for an eleven week course. Every Monday morning for three hours, they met

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with me at the computer lab of the Gilford Campus of New Hampshire College. At the first class meeting, I asked them to introduce themselves and share why they chose to attend this course. Quickly, I realized that it wasn't that they did not have something to say that may have made them appear cold or unresponsive, or have their counselors question their readiness for college; it was not having someone to say it to that had limited them. One woman confided that she felt people didn't listen to her because she spoke so poorly. She stumbled through her introduction, halting often to collect and refocus her thoughts; and in that morning's first writing sample, her verbal speech patterns were repeated almost identically. As the students introduced themselves, they began to see the benefits of improving their ability to tell their stories.

Yet, what affected me almost immediately was the quality of the class discussions. These students were intensely interested in their world. They were full of opinion and comment on a wide variety of subjects ranging from domestic violence to para-psychology. They did have stories to tell.

I based the course on Fred Morgan's text, *Here and Now III, An Approach to Writing Through Perception*. It is a non-intimidating book that illustrates the techniques of focusing and bringing stories to an audience in more vivid detail. Classwork and homework assignments were designed as artist sketches where, in turn, each physical sense was explored within a particular environment. I asked them to reserve judgement on an issue until they'd smelled it, tasted it, touched it, heard it, spoken with it, and finally felt it gurgle in their gut. I insisted that they not accept generalizations with-

out supporting them with specifics.

While each participant's editing was sharpened immediately with the constant requests on each other's part for more detail, two students, at our second class meeting, wanted to discuss the notion of being wary of how much detail one would share before knowing their intended audience fully.

"Should I tell you I enjoy hosting Tupperware parties?" a determined young woman blurted out. She went on to explain to me, the class nodding in approval, that as an AFDC client she could expect to be sanctioned for not reporting any income over twenty-dollars a month. A minimum sanction period would result in a three-month reduction in her grant proportionate to the income she received above the grant amount. As a Tupperware Hostess she would have to declare as income the value of the free gifts she would have received. Because of such bureaucratic control in even this small bit of their lives, seldom did these clients report such changes in their income.

So, too, were they familiar with the distinctions between inference based on fact, and inference improperly made. Much of their lives had been spent digging out from the fall-out of improper inferences made by social workers, psychiatrists, neighbors, and society, based on limited, skewed information and opinion.

At each additional class meeting another tool in the writing process was introduced and practiced. Writing exercises expanded from being aware of their surroundings, to clearly observing a scene, getting the feel of action, observing a person, perceiving emotional attitudes, to looking at themselves and examining desires. As each student participated in these exercises, they began to employ and better understand the age-old

foundations of writing: unity, economy, coherence, emphasis, narration, contrast, qualification and argument.

Yet, I was learning as much from them as they from me. Many of them had not planned to mess up their lives; it just happened. All of them would have loved to be living the American Dream of a loving spouse, two kids, a car, and a white clapboard cape with a picket fence. However, there were physical, mental and emotional barriers that needed to be surmounted in all of their lives. For some of them these barriers had spanned generations. But messing up was not a bad thing if they could learn from it.

I had recently heard that message from Brother Blake, the master teacher in Robert Inchansti's *Spitwad Sutras: Classroom Teaching as Sublime Vocation*, who had insisted that "finding your voice, as a writer, is really just finding your authority as a person . . . Writing is, in effect, the soul seeking its context, and in finding its context, discovering itself."

This was what I was about in this course, enabling these clients to find their voice, their authority, their soul. For some it was difficult. Of the seven who began the course, three dropped out within the first four weeks of class. One got a job, another had difficulty as a single parent keeping her car running and her children protected. The third had deeper reasons which I don't think she herself has understood yet. Abused and sexually molested as a child, she still seemed stuck at eight or nine or ten years old. Her sentence structures were basic. Her vocabulary limited. Her ideas disjointed. Her frame of reference distorted. She openly admitted to her being molested, yet couldn't find the authority inside herself to commit her feelings to paper.

"It's hard to write about somebody inside," had been her complaint each time I asked for clarification of an idea she was presenting in an assignment.

Finally, I asked her to begin researching the topic of child molestation. I wanted her to break free of the barrier that seemed to imprison her, her feeling that it had happened only to her.

After heavy revision and rethinking, this is what she turned out for her fifth writing assignment:

> At one point I wanted to put all men in jail. My mother was an alcoholic and couldn't see or acknowledge that I was being abused by uncles and my grandmother's friend. I felt that if these men hurt me that all men would. I can remember the day I went to my first foster home. My foster mother brought me with her to pick up my foster father. He looked in the back to say hi, and I jumped back from him because I was scared of men. Now my attitude has changed. Since I am in FIP 4 JOBS training, I realize that I can have more confidence in men. The education I am receiving has taught me that all men aren't evil.
>
> It also makes me feel that I don't have to be an alcoholic or child abuser. I can make sure my kids have more opportunity than I had when I was a child. I can continue to go to school and get some training so I can help others that have been in the same position that I have been in.

She had promised to continue to practice her newfound writing craft this past autumn on a tutorial basis. But she has dropped out of the program. I have not heard from her in months. While I feel that the seed

of hope has been planted, I also realize that to produce a long-lasting effect, the nurturing must continue. For me, that may be the greatest benefit in Writing Across the Curriculum programs—that the inherent nurturing of writing, body communicating with soul, must be holistic.

Two of the four remaining students have enrolled in certificate programs at an area Technical College. Another has undergone more intensive testing and training through Vocational Rehabilitation to better prepare him for college. The remaining student had taken the course as a measure of her self-improvement.

That's a fifty-seven percent completion rate. While it's only the beginning of a continuing journey towards successfully leaving the welfare roles, it's not a bad start for a group of citizens society has often written off.

One of the final assignments of the course was to define and determine as accurately as they could the process of the writer discovering another person's attitude, the rationale behind their actions. Narration, storytelling, maintaining unity in the piece, and deeper understanding of others, were my hoped-for results of the assignment. Here is what one writer shared with us:

> I sat in the room thinking to myself, "This feud has been going on in the family for as long as I could remember." It was always something, either someone did this or someone did that and it never ended, just one thing after another.
>
> I am older now, and I would like to think that I'm beyond the petty bickering over insignificant bullshit that really didn't matter very much in the first place.

I don't mean to mislead you, or say that I'm better than anyone else, because I'm not. All I'm really trying to say is that I too used to think that way when I was younger, until one day my father told me a story that would forever change the way that I would treat others. It was a story about not caring about others' feelings, and the price one may pay as a result of one's actions.

I came out of my bedroom, sat down at the kitchen table, and started to prepare breakfast when I looked up to see my Dad sitting at the head of the table just staring down at the table surface in front of him. So I said, "Good morning. What's for breakfast?"

He just sort of glanced up, nodded and grumbled acknowledgement. Then he looked at me for a moment and asked, "Do you remember your Uncle?"

"No," I said, "not really. I remember you talking about him, why?"

He paused for a moment thinking about it. Then he started to speak in the reverent whisper he always used when he wanted to make a point or when he wanted to have you learn something. "That's ok. It was a long time ago and you were still very young. But let me tell you about your uncle. He was a good man at heart but he didn't treat people very well."

"So why did he treat people so badly?" I asked.

"I think it was because he was unhappy about something. Maybe because he had done something wrong a long time ago and the guilt of what he had done was making him unhappy."

Then his face started to change. It had the look of someone in thought, like someone trying to remem-

bersomething deep and shrouded in a mist of the past.

"Well the point is that he didn't treat people well and so after a while people stopped trying to be around him. Now this went on for a long time until about a week and a half before his death, when he started doing something uncharacteristic. He started going around apologizing to all the people he had treated badly over the years." He paused for a moment, then continued. "It was like he knew he was going to die and he wanted to make amends to all the people he had treated wrongly in his life before he was to pass on. He even tried to find me, but I was gone that day and so he never got to see me before he passed on."

Then this strange look came over his face like someone who was remembering something painful to them and he said, "He just came downstairs one day, sat down at the breakfast table, looked at his wife lovingly and told her he had always loved her and always would. Then he crossed his forearms on the table in front of him and put his head down on his arms like a child at school trying to rest at their table, and was gone."

He paused in deep thought for what felt like a long time, and in that time several looks crossed his face; pain, regret, loss, puzzlement, and then he continued.

"I think the point I'm trying to make is that if you treat people badly you will someday have to answer for your actions. And this is the same for all things. Whatever you do, you will someday have to answer for it. If not to yourself, to someone or something else. You see I think your uncle had

only a limited amount of time to settle the affairs of his life, and sadly, I don't think he accomplished his task. I have thought about this over the years and I don't think I would want to have all those wrongs on my conscience either."

Then he looked at me, arose without a word, and walked away. Leaving me to ponder the story he had just told me.

I was thrilled. Not only had the writer investigated the attitude of one individual, but he had managed to explore the issues of the soul affecting three men in this family, an uncle, a father and a son. I did not teach this. At most I enabled it to happen; maintaining the physical comfort of the room, the encouragement and peer editing of fellow students, and my gentle prodding, permitted this writer's seed to sprout. As these students walked away after the last class, I pondered the stories they had left with me. I realized that I had not changed their world for them. But I had helped them to recognize that the chains that once held them as young elephants to deeply embedded stakes of a welfare cycle could be broken. They could now trumpet their own freedom. We, as instructors committed to a Writing Across the Curriculum program in the varied disciplines we share with our 17-70 year old college students, must ask our students to sound similar calls to freedom, and in an even more essential role, we must prepare that nurturing place in our hearts that will hear their calls.

Writing-To-Learn from Vietnam: The Wartime Letters of Walter McDougall

by Duncan C. McDougall

As much as I'd love to claim that I taught my three-year-younger brother Walter all he knows, I cannot. Wally (The Walrus) McDougall has done it on his own.

Wally followed oldest brother George and me into Illinois' New Trier Township High School and then into Amherst College in Massachusetts, but he was never enough like us to follow our other leads. Both George and I were good students, but as a scholar Wally was in his own league. We did our homework. The Walrus studied.

At Amherst Wally studied history, and graduated with high honors in 1968.

Nineteen sixty-eight was a bitch. In January the North Koreans captured a US Navy ship (the Pueblo) at sea and the Tet offensive moved the Vietnam War deep into South Vietnam, resulting in the first guerrilla attacks in and around Saigon; in April Martin Luther King was murdered; in June Robert F. Kennedy was shot to death just after winning the California primary; and in August Czechoslovakia was invaded by the USSR. Throughout the year the US was wracked by demonstrations against the war. Black Power groups had grown militant and were threatening war in the streets. Well-meaning Americans were being torn apart by the dividing forces. Patriots were forced to doubt the war, and therefore the government. Civil rights activists were forced to doubt the direction of

the movement: was it leading us to social justice or another civil war? Students were "taking over" university administration buildings in protest of "oppressive" policies, and authorities were reacting with force of law. Everyone seemed to be shouting and raising fists in anger.

Upon graduating amidst this national melee, Wally's ambition was to become an historian, so he joined the army: "Our generation's war was on, so I had to go." Wally had a purpose, and was, at twenty-one, willing to bet his life on it.

Singleness of purpose is the key to great achievement. I have written before on that point (1). It occurs to me now that my brother Walter's life is a prime example, for Wally was later to win the 1986 Pulitzer Prize for History for *...the heavens and the Earth, A Political History of the Space Age* (2) and is today chairing the Program in International Relations at the University of Pennsylvania. His prize-winning book traced the development of state-supported rocketry from Czarist Russia in the Nineteenth Century through Nazi Germany's V-2 Program to the Cold War's US-Soviet space race, culminating in Apollo 11's successful landing on the moon. Its preface opens with these words:

> I missed the first moon landing. In July 1969 I had the night shift as chief of artillery fire direction in a particularly nasty jungle base in the III Corps region of South Vietnam. A three- or four-days old copy of *Stars and Stripes* told us of Apollo 11. I do not recall that it made much of an impression on us, except maybe to poke our ready sense of irony. ...
>
> One morning last December, while looking for some-

thing in a basement file cabinet, I came across the "Monsters", long letters from Wally written in 1968 and 1969, when he was 21 and 22. As I started to read, I realized there was something special in my hands. Not only were these letters fascinating first-hand history, but also here was a man expressing the ambition to become a better writer while writing-to-learn both what he was involved in and all else that he could from the experience. It occurred to me that WAC readers might see value in these letters, as they exemplify a successful writer's early work: reportage, situation-analysis, self-analysis, and writing to communicate intense feelings. Perhaps there is something in these excerpts that will help our students see value in keeping personal journals, or in regular letter writing, that they never dreamed could be there.

WAC formalities aside, having found these letters, I wanted to share them. I hope the reader will forgive my unabashed pride in my "kid" brother.

Readers should know that all but the first two of these letters were sent first to our Dad, who copied them and distributed them to a list of friends and relatives whom Wally had specified.

I have intentionally avoided "cleaning up" these missives, meaning both that those offended by Army language might wish to abstain, and that rough syntax may appear. Remember that these were handwritten letters, most written under wartime conditions from the field. All are what we in WAC would call "first drafts."

* * *

In Stateside training Wally wrote from Ft. Leonard Wood, Missouri:

17 Oct 68
Thursday

Dear Duncan + Margie [my first wife],

I am on a night-fire watch between Midnight and 1 A.M. So I am exhausted, my eyes are half shut, and I only have 20 more minutes. Therefore this will just be a note to remind you that I am here, that I hate it, but that I still survive in body and spirit...

The Army is a glorified Boy Scout and Rifle Club, with a lot of shit thrown in to eliminate any possible fun. FTA. ...

The first two weeks we had classroom work on military justice and courtesy, and official U.S. propaganda on why we should all rot in the jungle. FTA. ...we also had lots of PT and DD, Dismounted Drill, with a goodly portion of bayonet fighting. With every thrust or parry we make we're required to sound off with a blood-curdling growl, and before each session, we all answer "What's the spirit of the bayonet fighter?" with "KILL!" (Growl). ...it offends my sensibilities. ...

May I keep my ass alive, but never let the Army mold me into a killer or a no-think.

11 Nov 68
Monday
50th Anniversary of Armistice Day
and the War to End all Wars.
When will they ever learn?

Dear Duncan,

I received your letter, but we immediately went out on a 6-day bivouac so I never answered it. I must say tho, that it wasn't terribly interesting. Business is not my bag, and you have hit a new low if that's all you can talk about...

Well, Basic Training is almost over...

Then, from Ft. Sill, Oklahoma, Wally wrote:

19 Nov 68
Tuesday

... I am now in the mighty Artillery and it's a damned sight better than Basic Training. There are no screaming D.I.'s, not much harassment, enough sleep, good food... The Artillery branch is the "gentlemen's branch" of the Army (if any branch is gentlemanly) and basically more cerebral. Right now we are reviewing algebra, geometry and trigonometry, which is why I'm clandestinely writing letters. Things will get tougher when we begin to actually compute Artillery problems, but we are all looking forward to it. Anything so that we can finally feel that the Army is using our heads.

The rest of Wally's Army letters were from Vietnam, where he, a lad from the Chicago suburbs, was by coincidence first posted as a replacement to a New Hampshire National Guard outfit: the Phu Loi headquarters of the 3/197th Field Artillery, an activated Concord-based unit. Phu Loi is a few dozen miles north of Saigon.

2 MAR 69
345 days to go

Dear Relations and Friends (top billing rotates),

I am lying on a comfy mattress, drinking a ginger ale, and listening to a stereo tape recorder. Life of Riley? Well, admittedly the American GI in Vietnam is a peculiar and fascinating phenomenon. He lives like no soldier in history — probably has it better off than an officer in a Roman occupation legion. And being a student of 18-19-20th Century history, I know well what privations the private soldier put up with in past peacetimes as well as war. And the GI "Grunts" (Infantrymen) out in the boonies have it as bad as infantrymen in the past. ... almost everything the U.S. soldier has over here, he's built or bought himself. The hooches are spare, but solid. ... there are also hooches turned into an EM Club, an NCO Club and an Officer's Club. ... The mess hall has an atmosphere of insects, but it's large and comfy. An outdoor theater for movies was built, tho the damn VC have prevented any showings lately — we're always on alert. ...The biggest difference in this army from previous ones is electricity. We have five big generators completely enclosed with a

million sandbags, because they and their gasoline and oil cans are what provide every and any luxury we have.

... Of course, I am in Phu Loi, a rather large base camp. At our three firing batteries, there is even less water, no showers, no latrines, no mess hall, no clubs, no extra electricity, etc. I'll probably get shipped out in several months to a battery.

Pages later, he goes on to say,

... Whatever one's views, when he's in the damn Army, he has to get involved and pull for our side; his life depends on it. But US policy is such that it's almost impossible to accomplish anything against the enemy. Whatever the anti-war propagandists may say that is all too true, the claim that the US is "burning babies" is utterly false. The artillery and aircraft are overly careful not to fire anywhere where there could possibly be any friendly troops or civilians. ...Every night around here they locate a company or whole battalion of enemy troops. We haven't fired once. You've probably read about the "post-Tet offensive", and heard that Bien Hoa, Long Binh, and Phu Chong have been hit. We could have supported any of the bases with withering barrages of fire — we couldn't shoot. The VC are no fools. They stick close to villages, rivers, roads, and other areas they know are No-fire Zones. Three NVA (North Viet. Army) regiments have infiltrated to the area 10-50 miles north of Saigon (our area), untouched. Frustrating.

... With most of the initial "getting squared away" over with, I'm thinking about writing again. The trouble is, that I very much want to write a type of "historical

fiction", short stories, for instance. But my ability at fiction-writing doesn't exist, and I can't see myself writing meaningful essays until I've been educated some more. The soldier has, very much, to avoid gut reaction-analysis. This is the tendency when one is not surrounded by books in an objective atmosphere. Then again, capturing and infusing the subjective, personal yet collective view of the wartime soldier might be more valuable. The GI must be collective in his view, that is, get outside himself and attempt the "big picture": how else can he justify his position?

The GI in a base camp has it made ... duty here is much preferable to stateside "spit and polish" harassment. So, the degree of contentment or mere "acceptance" is high. No one is committing suicide, going AWOL, or staging strikes for peace or better conditions. But no one — ... based on 75-100 opinions, no one is a) in favor of the war; b) in understanding of why the government is in favor of the war; c) prepared to give or even risk his own well-being for the war effort. There are heroes, to be sure — I had to march in a parade at Ft. Leonard Wood honoring a number of dead heroes. Every one of them ... won their honors in attempts to save a buddy or in some defensive action where his and his buddies' lives were at stake. Ours is a strangely spoiled, unaggressive, disillusioned but complacent, and exceptionally apathetic army. ...

An American army with no sense of purpose, no idealistic basis, no deep-seated sense of righteousness beneath the grumbling exterior, is a unique thing in our history. Though the all-consuming assurance and self-righteousness our nation has suffered from is expressly evil in its effect on policy, still I can say from the point of view of the military historian, that an army without

this assurance is on the brink of mediocrity or disaster. Like the Turkish army of an unpopular caliph, a purposeless army is likely to fight for its own existence in a defensive position, but also likely to refuse or make half-hearted attempts at attacking. An army must have a purpose — it need not be idealistic, tho American motives usually have been, supposedly. An army will fight for booty, for glory, for empire, or even for the joy of killing. Americans fight for none of these things — and refuse their stated intention as dictated by Washington. The American GI goes to war to avoid imprisonment, does his duty so as not to jeopardize his discharge, and lives not for the end of the war, and not for victory, but for the day he goes back to the "land of the big PX."

Training and propaganda is aimed at the level of a simian. The credibility gap is felt as strongly here as on campuses. And on top of the universal doubt are the special ones produced by the confused and half-ass effort being made over here. Why are we here? and Now that we're here, why don't we do something? are questions that are never answered. Officers pay lip service to the government line ... . Enlisted men are open (to each other) about their dismay. So they go back to their hooch after duty, play psychedelic music and turn on with MaryJane.

... if the age of the idealistic GI is over, then a volunteer professional army comprised of men who like soldiering is the only recourse. But how does this bode for a "peace-loving democratic democracy?"

In the Stateside letters, I felt I was reading a college man's apology for his choice of Army life. Wally seemed to

be designing his descriptions to make it sound "cool" to be a soldier, "though a real challenge for a sensitive intellectual" such as he. That tone is gone now. Here I see a young historian at work. Serious observation characterizes his description of base camp life. Historical analogy (some seemingly gratuitous...perhaps there for a history professor on his distribution list) and analysis have begun to appear as Wally struggles to describe the American soldiers' lifestyles and motivations in Vietnam, and to relate them to our past wars. In discussing the volunteer army, he even extrapolates the historical trend he has identified, and risks a prediction...which, of course, has proved prophetic.

8 March 69
340 days to go

Dear Hedonists,

According to the omnipotent "needs of the army", I have been moved again. Happily not out in the boonies — yet. As a matter of fact, I'm still in Phu Loi. They shipped me across post to Bravo Battery of 3/197 ARTY for a little FDC practice with a firing battery. For you uninitiated, FDC (Fire Direction Control) consists of an underground bunker, lots of maps, high powered arithmetic, chart-reading, radios and FADAC, the artillery's mini-computer. I'm "supposed" to be here two weeks...

A battery normally has 6 guns --we have 3, the others are all in the field at Fire Support Base Dotty (they're all named after girls). But the ones we have are an awesome sight. As you cut through the barbed and concertina wire, turn the corner past the generators, and approach the descent to the bunker, an opening be-

tween two sandbag walls reveals, 60 ft. in front... a short shiny tube with a black hole at the end., 155 millimeters across. As you approach, the tube proves to be short and squat as the base appears, solid, solid. The overall impression borders on terror. The FDC is too close. When a round is fired the walls shake, the eardrums rebel, the floor quivers, and pencils and books fall on the floor. Last night the nearest Howitzer fired a charge 7 (Max. Chg.) right over our heads. It knocked a telephone four inches over the edge of a table. At night the flash extends a good twenty feet out of the barrel and smoke billows for twenty yards. When the battery fires a salvo, you'd swear it was doomsday.

The immediacy of power, destructive power, to one standing near, is admittedly compelling, fascinating, even exhilarating. The most terrible feature of great machines of war is their effect on those who make and operate. Man makes the monster, but the monster hypnotizes man, and man, like a robot, sees to the monster's reproduction. Only when outside influence turns one's mind back to humanism, morality, does the monster become ugly and horrible. There is no doubt that man has a deep instinct for violence; the spirit, the madness of battle is all too real. Only afterwards does the depression and shame take hold. Wellington, the superhuman "Iron Duke", remarked that "the only tragedy worse than a battle won is a battle lost." ...

Much is made of how awful it must be for the poor serviceman in Vietnam to read about the dissent and protest against the war at home. Well, it's true, as a matter of fact it's tragic, but not in the way the "Support your local police -- Kill for Christ -- no think patriots" seem to think. As far as most of us over here are

concerned, the "peace-niks" from flower children to J. W. Fulbright are fighting for us, to bring us home. But the depression I feel is for the seeming universal stupidity of Americans. The latest round of college riots sickens my heart. The continuing blindness of the "establishment" frustrates me to the point of tears. Sure, there are people rooting for me, for the troops, back home, but for all the wrong reasons. The hawks refuse to have the least bit of objectivity rammed into their brains. The doves (incl. college students) usually see one or two levels deeper into the problem, at least to the point of recognizing that war and blind faith are not a panacea, but their emotionalism (and in the case of students, sheer adolescent presumption) drives them into an opposite no-think subjectivity. The establishment refuses to change, so the "leftists" turn to disruption, so authorities justify their reputation by calling out bayonets, which in turn infuriates the "rebels" to more rebellion. Yet the foreign and domestic problems of the U.S. are understandable if the admittedly intellectual college population, and the admittedly capable politicians, would only stop to think. Why can't we "lower our voices" as our admittedly capable president [Nixon] implores?...

The government makes tired statements about "no more Munich's" and oversees the deaths of 25,000 more GI's to give "meaning" to the deaths of the first 25,000. The students in their presumption and youth (which is becoming a dirty word to me) wave VC flags to emphasize their hatred of the "Fascist Pigs". God damn it, I don't like this lousy war one bit, but I'll tell you that the Viet Cong are Evil, Evil, Evil. I too would be driven to violence by such a display.

O tempora! O mores! I apologize for the outburst. ...

So much for the weekly report. Pretty grim. Next time I will strain to include some light-hearted material. As for now, be advised that Wonder-Walrus is still a live hero...

Peace, Wally

This was the last of the "weekly reports". Maybe time became short as Wally gained experience and responsibility. Notable in this last letter was Wally's use of pen and paper to organize and evaluate his thoughts. War and its machines are both horrible and compelling. The chaos at home is both tragic and stupid, and both hawks and doves are missing the point. The newspapers were coming through to our soldiers, reporting the dissent at home (in itself, a remarkable fact), and causing this thoughtful GI to ponder. I perceive catharsis: a lot off his chest. And a trusted audience who will, he knows, try to understand. In trying to make us understand, Wally understands better himself.

This next monster came two-and-a-half months later.

14th of May [1969]
272 days to go

Dear Subscribers:

It's raining twice a day now, usually one normal, though prolonged shower, and one torrential downpour. ...

No news is good news in the war story department. But I'm afraid there is no lack of news. On the contrary, buku excitement. Two nights ago I was writing a letter to Beth with undivided attention when rudely interrupted by the now-familiar words, "Fire

Mission!" Everyone jumps and Wally runs outside to start the FADAC generator. "Bright Lifer (our new and embarrassing call sign, especially for National Guardsmen) 69, this is Certain Process 122, Grid 849269, VC mortars firing, adjusting azimuth 6100." Certain Process is the call sign of the special forces detachments who accompany the ARVNS (South Viets) in our area. Since he gave an adjusting azimuth, we assumed he was going to adjust the rounds in. So we fired one round, he called in a correction, and the FADAC generator overheated and cut off! We always fire the FADAC data, and use the manual computations only as a check. But with the FADAC out, we had to fire manual data which is never as accurate, so I grabbed the secondary set of artillery slide rules, and we struggled to check in our computations, that is, the chief computer and I. On top of everything else, we had been in the middle of our met (meteorological) correction computations when the mission came down, so we had to improvise met corrections hurriedly. Nerves were running pretty high - the people out in the field depend on us, and us solely. We finally got a second round out, and called the element: "Process 122, Lifer 69, Shot, over," to let him know the round is on the way. Nothing. No response. We called several more times and finally he responded. "Ah, uh, this is Process 122, uh, I think we're being attacked..." "This is 69, can you observe? Over." "This is Process, uh, I don't know .....Oh! That's perfect, give me the battery!" Those are sweet words to the artilleryman. "Roger that!"

So on our manual data we blasted off a "battery-two rounds", and called back Certain Process for a sitrep (situation report). He answered (we were relaying through another station at this point) "Well, uh, I don't

know about a sitrep, but we sure aren't under attack anymore since 69 fired for effect!" The chief computer and I shook hands. It's nice to know you might have saved some lives... .

Last night it was our turn. Sitting in the hooch getting ready for bed, and the sirens start going off all over post, which means a Red Alert, which means that Phu Loi is being attacked. The first thing we're supposed to do is grab our steel pot (helmet), flak jacket, and rifle, and proceed with haste to the FDC bunker. When there are incoming mortars and rockets, no one needs to be told to make haste. ... So Phu Loi got hit last night by three rockets and some mortars. The mortars are no sweat if you're inside a bunker, but rockets are killers -- they can blow anything apart, and kill just from the concussion. ... nobody likes getting shot at, but I still have never regretted joining the Army. Everyone ought to get shot at once, it's a humbling experience.

It's a weird feeling; though I've only been a "soldier" for 9 months, I feel like I've been in the Army all my life. It's cruel when memories fade, and in a totally alien environment like Army Vietnam, everything fades. The only reality is here, everything back in "the world", the "land of the big PX", is a fantasia, a utopian dreamworld of the far, far distant past, like the reflections of a Bridey Murphy. ...

We went out to the firing range a few days ago to test our weapons. There was a girl there, a Korean girl dressed in jungle commando fatigues, learning to fire an M-16. And someone asked me why my eyes were tearing.

All you need is,
LOVE, Walrus

I feel inadequate to describe what I see happening now. Perhaps a fellow Vietnam veteran could do better. But I know that I see personal growth, pride in doing well a difficult job, and growth as a writer (in spite of the cliche about the humbling nature of being shot at). Several months, several moves, and much war later, things had gotten worse.

4 September 69
159 days to go

Dear Angels of a Dream World,

Despair is a rare thing among youth, I would judge. Rarely do young people have cause for true heart-breaking despair, and if they do the chances are they can ride out the storm. As I see it, despair is not the result of the mere fact of outside events, but rather the inability of one to cope with the events..., the final impotence. This is the stuff of despair. And being so, it is not the ailment of young, who haven't learned the limits of their capabilities, to whom every idea must be original and earthshaking, who are convinced of their ability to publish great works, sway minds, and ride the crest of the historical wave... .

I experienced despair, or something very akin, that last day at FSB Ann. Exhausted from Sysiphian labors, chilled to the bone, soaked, with no food or water, alone with no perimeter in the middle of the enemy's stamping ground, with dusk falling and no way of escaping. Fear? To be sure, but what results when one is overwhelmed by events... it's a situation one doesn't get into very often. ... It's hard to know that

a never ending chain of "hard knocks" is undoubtedly changing my personality without my having the time or far-sightedness to understand. I'm really quite lonely.

The epic tale of what has transpired in my crazy life since the last Monster will probably leave you with... the vague impression that I am writing in ancient Greek. If so, so be it. *O Musa, mihi causas memora*.

August 16 was the day we left LZ [Landing Zone] Buttons up north near Song Be. Looking at the calendar I see now it was a Saturday, though one never knows the day of the week, except Monday, when we get two malaria pills instead of one. As usual on the last day of a move, everyone rises at 2 AM to begin tearing down. And as usual, I had the 5P M - 2 AM shift in FDC, so I had no sleep that night. Furthermore, an NVA battalion had been cornered about ten Kliks (Kilometers) out and we fired everything we had all night in one of the most hectic nights in FDC I've jittered through. At one point I was shooting illumination with one gun, adjusting HE (High Explosive) with a second, and firing ICM (the illegal "firecracker" round)... with the third. I am convinced that army life, besides destroying my hearing and teeth, is taking ten years off my heart as well.

With the Kaleidoscopic tropical sunrise, veiled by the horizontal mists clinging to Nui Ba Ra, we had to bust behind doubly to get torn down in time. In time for the first C-130 air force sortie back to Phu Loi. Of course, FDC wasn't scheduled to depart until the last sortie, but we had to be ready for the first. The C-130 is supposed to be the most reliable and durable of aircraft. At one point we had four giant airplanes sitting on the tiny airstrip; three were inoperable. We were at the

strip at 0830; we finally boarded an airplane at 4 o'clock in the afternoon. It was over 100 degrees-- there was no shade at all, and there was no food or water, and we had had, of course, a hard, sleepless night. I calculated that the sun on August 16, it being 36 days from the autumnal equinox, had reached a latitude of about 12 degrees North; needless to say, we are about 12 degrees N. The sun was at the very zenith, and killing.

Literally stumbling back into Phu Loi, I was greeted by more delightful news. I knew we were going on a move two days hence, but never dreamed that I would be sent right back out in the field again. It would be my third move in a row, and this was no gut move, it was Delta Battery (Jungle Battery). I was sent. With the NG's getting set to go home, they were short of chief computers, and out in the field, you've got to know your job. There was no time to lay head in hands and cry. Twenty-four hours between ordeals, and since I was to be chief of the FDC in the field, the time could not be spent sleeping. So August 17, George's B-Day and Mike and Cindy's first anniversary, was as hectic as any other...

... Sixty miles of rain forest to the north and east again, in fact, just twenty miles due east of LZ Buttons, again in the thick of the enemy offensive, again near the Cambodian border. This time it's LZ Caldwell, known to the Special Forces as FOB (Forward Operations Base) Marge. ...

Marge is situated on top of an overturned bowl of ground... in all directions the bottom [rim] of our bowl is blocked from vision, that is, the ground just outside our wire--a hairy situation.

The first days were quiet, which was fortunate...

Delta Battery has never had poorer support. Our sister unit, the 2/13 Arty (105's) never did give a damn about its field element. But our own battalion always made sure we had everything we needed and then some. Our mail was always prompt, any resupply we needed would be sent out ASAP. Our EM club would send out free sodas and beer every other day. Our Battery Commander would come out often to talk with the men and ascertain if he could do any more to help us out. But the National Guard is gone now; and now nobody cares. Mail delivery is a shambles. No gratuities of any kind are sent out. Even stark necessities sit back in Phu Loi, because nobody cares. We ate C-rations the first four days because no rations were delivered. ... Potable water was almost unknown for the first ten days. At one point we went three-and-one-half days with no drinking water. There is a small river nearby where an armed party can fill up used powder canisters. It's all right for washing, but three cases of trench mouth resulted from drinking it. FDC, being the brains of the artillery, rigged up a pancho hung on engineer stakes - the head-hole acted as a funnel hole and one good monsoon rain will fill half a dozen powder canisters (approx. 15 gallons). When you haven't wetted your lips for 15 or 16 hours, you'll gladly drink rain water.

We live in culverts again, and again they are infested with rats, so one must keep his toes to himself or he'll be in for the painful series of rabies shots.

After the general misery of our living conditions became a steady depressant, more joyous news began lifting our spirits. Like the news that one battalion of Cambods had made contact with a large force of NVA and been forced back. And then the harried cry crack-

led over our radio that our forward observer, a popular young lieutenant only in country for several weeks, had taken an AK-47 round in the head. It's always a blow, at least to me, when a lot of Cambods are hit, or when a Special Forces is killed, but the concern is great when one of our own, an artilleryman is hurt. We listened on the infantry frequency as the Medevac chopper was guided in - but the NVA chased it away with heavy ground fire. Several times the Medevac tried, but he couldn't get in - the NVA were everywhere. Meanwhile Lt. Dostel bled to death.

Our one day in Phu Loi the announcement about the National Guard departure was made. They would leave Vietnam two weeks early and be reunited in Long Binh the last week of August. It was good news for them, and I was happy for them because they were great guys, though it was clear to all that once they left the battery would go to hell, and be a miserable place to live. Even now the reports are that Phu Loi is stifling. The new battery commander is a personality-less lifer who lets the fat old first sergeant and chief of firing battery run roughshod over the troops. ... But to continue, the New Hampshireites, called from their families and jobs to spend a year in this hole, were finally going home. I needn't mention that the state of New Hampshire, that is to say mothers and wives, were euphoric, and that the homecoming was to be one of those truly heartwarming and spirit-lifting events in their lives. [Then...] you may have read about the five NG's from A Btry 3/197 driving down Thunder Road from their FSB at Thunder III. They had three days left in Vietnam - they hit a mine in the road, and all five were killed.

Then the battle that was making headlines in the

Stars and Stripes developed. One battalion of Cambodians was ambushed by a large force of NVA... over half the 300 man unit was killed, wounded or missing. The second 3rd Mobile Strike Force battalion rushed to their relief. In another 24 hours, half of that battalion was chewed to bits. NVA casualties were almost non-existent.

Everyone was getting rather nervous at that point. Our field elements were beaten and still surrounded; there was a large, very large (est. two regiments) enemy force in our immediate area. For that matter, there still is. Things had gotten too big for the Special Forces; besides, they had bungled badly.

So, enter the 1st Cavalry Division / Airmobile, come to save the day. What had they to offer? Two companies of infantry and their private helicopter fleet. For this, they arrive at Marge lock, stock and barrel with a whole strut of captains, four majors, two light colonels, two bird colonels, and a major general! So in they came, playing the role of deus ex machina with all the self-importance and conceit thereto. Their plan was to swoop down with their invincible choppers ("slicks" and Huey Cobra gunships, codenamed "Blue Max"), evacuate the Cambods, then B-52 the whole area for two nights. My experience with the 1st Cav at LZ Buttons was nothing but bad. And they did it again. Every time they tried to drop into the LZ from which the Cambods would be picked up, the ground fire was prohibitive. In all, they had three of their invincible gunships shot down. They'd judged our artillery "insufficient", the sorry idiots. And they finally got in to carry out the evacuation after we had "prepped" the LZ with 200 rounds. That silenced Charlie.

So then the Cav calls in the vaunted B-52s. To

show how effective they were, it came to light the next day (4 September) that the Cav had inexplicably left five men on the LZ the previous day! Good Grief!! A slick went out and not only picked up the five men unhurt, but received the characteristic heavy enemy fire. The LZ was ground zero for the B-52s. The following day the 1st Cav departed, licked. We were left with an unbeaten foe seven miles away.

...It is demoralizing, people, to be a member of a losing army. On a small scale to be sure, it nevertheless leaves a sick and miserable feeling to be roundly defeated time after time. We have been granted a reprieve. Uncle Ho is dead, and three days of silence are being enjoyed at this time. Since we're dealing with the regular North Vietnamese Army, the chances are that they will honor the truce. Needless to say, I will be pleased as punch to diti-moi (scram) on the 14th to prepare for R & R....

Wally

* * *

There are more letters, but I'm sure the point is made. This man lived the war, was an historian, so felt compelled to record it. In doing so he created first-hand history, worked out his own viewpoint on many of the most troubling issues of that troubled time, remained sane, and grew as a man and as a writer. You have seen the growth, the changing viewpoint, and the increasing sophistication of these letters. I believe that the writing itself was an important part of that growth. I also believe that writing helped keep Wally sane, and may explain his avoidance of the serious psychological impairments

so many brought home from Vietnam. Wally has had his share of nightmares...but has never been crippled by them.

As I sat reading on the basement floor, these letters brought tears to my eyes. I saw Wally becoming Dr. Walter A. McDougall, professor of history, author of four books and numerous articles, family man, citizen. I thanked God that he made it home.

Anyone interested in reading more of Wally's work will find all four of his titles at Lamson Library. I especially recommend his latest, *Let the Sea Make a Noise.: A History of the North Pacific from Magellan to MacArthur* (3).

In closing, let me share with you just a few paragraphs from that book. Again in the preface, which in this work Wally calls "The Summons", the lasting impact of Wally's Vietnam War experience is evident. In telling of several incidents which explain his interest in the North Pacific Ocean, Wally writes:

> It's odd — no, I suppose it isn't odd that the Vietnam War brought me to this ocean for the first time. Can't remember anything about the flight from Fort Sill, Oklahoma, to Oakland, but I sure remember being bused to the Army base down on the Bay and locked up in a warehouse lest we go AWOL. There were protesters outside, purporting to save us lambs from the slaughter. A year later they were still there for us, but now we were baby-killers. How asinine the Army was to fly us over on a commercial jet, complete with stewardesses and Muzak. "I'm leavin' on a jet plane, don't know when I'll be back again." Great for morale. But the stopover at Clark field in the Philippines — that was the point. To feel the

moistness and smell Asia, and see jungle on the horizon and the Stars and Stripes above it. It seemed wrong, not for any political reason, just ... wrong.

Then there was Fort Ross. Strange that I taught at Berkeley twelve years and never checked it out. Then a friend suggested that I might like to see the old Russian fort. Did I! Imagine the flag of the Russian-American Trading Company flying over the California Coast, an armory stocked with muskets and cannon forged in St. Petersburg in the early 1800s, biscuit barrels and samovars, and the little chapel and onion dome caked with residue of rising incense. American flags in the Philippines, Russian flags in Sonoma County ... now Japanese flags on buses at Pearl Harbor. The North Pacific got parceled and reparceled in a hurry.

Still four hours to Honolulu. They locked us up there, too, while the plane was refueling on the way to Vietnam. I wonder why they flew us the long way on the westbound flight — via Hawaii, Wake Island and the Philippines — but flew us home on the Great Circle Route via Japan and — well, we were supposed to stop at Anchorage, but didn't. Major jet stream help, I guess. But did I sleep on that Freedom Bird! It would be great, sublime to sleep that well again.

Endnotes

(1) See McDougall, Duncan C., "The Principle of Slack Ropes, or Managing on Purpose". *Operations Management Review*, Spring, 1987.

(2) Published by Basic Books, New York, 1986.

3) McDougall, Walter A. *Let the Sea Make a Noise*..., Basic Books, New York, 1993. Quotation is from p. 8.